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STRATEGY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

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Bird, Brevet-Major W. D.

Lectures on the strategy of the Franco-German war.

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LECTURES ON THE STRATEGY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR 1870 UP TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

LECTURES ON THE STRATEGY

OF THE

FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

1870

UP TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

BY

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PREFACE

THESE lectures were originally given at the Staff College, Quetta. The facts have been taken from the official accounts of the war, and the text has been so arranged that the campaign can be studied from both French and German points of view.

In the Appendices are tables showing the positions of the forces on each successive day, and the plans give the actual and supposed positions of the armies at various junctures.

At the end of the book will be found a series of problems suggested by the operations.

W. D. B.

May, 1909.

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LECTURES ON THE STRATEGY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR 1870 UP TO THE BATTLE OF SEDAN

I

IN a closed corporation such as that of modern Europe, no expanding nation can hope to attain place amongst its older rivals without causing serious dislocation of their concerns and interests. Hence a claimant for rank amongst the great Powers will, usually, be compelled to assert and substantiate its position by force of arms, thus following the universal law of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence.

The successful campaign of 1866 against Austria was, therefore, only a stage in the rise of Prussia, who, at the conclusion, found herself confronted by a powerful France, jealous of the young aspirant, and resolute, at all costs, to hinder Prussian aims.

Such state of tension exists, and can exist, only so long as it is preferable to actual hostilities, and in these circumstances no farseeing statesman neglects all possible political and military preparations for a life and death struggle.

French Preparations and Operations.

No one was better aware than the Emperor Napoleon III of the obligations imposed on France by the Prussian victory over the Austrians, and within six weeks of Konigratz he consulted a confidant, General Lebrun, how the numbers of the French military forces could be increased,

without, however, adding to the burden of national taxation, direct or indirect.

The problem proving too intricate for solution by General Lebrun, a commission of ministers and generals was soon afterwards assembled, under the presidency of the Emperor, to consider the matter.

In the course of the deliberations of the commission, the military members formulated demands for a trained army, numbering in all, active, reserve, and territorial, one million men—that is, of about double the strength actually available.

But the civilians, perhaps believing that soldiers are universally alarmists, demurred to these proposals, urging that the country would not, when foreign relations were apparently undisturbed, accept so great an increase in the military budget. Besides, was not the great Paris Exhibition, trumpeted to the world as the initiation of the millennium, about to be opened, and the moment was, therefore, voted especially unpropitious for increased army expenditure.

These arguments prevailed, and, in the sequel, cost France many more millions than would the increase of her army.

However, as a concession to military opinion, it was decided to establish a territorial organization, or Garde Mobile, of untrained or semi-trained men, who could be called up on declaration of war, and would, during its course, become fit to reinforce the field armies.

The Garde Mobile was actually voted in 1868, but, as no money was forthcoming for training, the 500,000 men, though nominally organized, remained uninstructed during the ensuing years.

Notwithstanding, France was not altogether apathetic in military preparations, for she considerably improved her armament, introducing the Chassepot, a breech-loading rifle of ·433 calibre, sighted to 1300 yards, ranging to about a mile, and a better weapon than the Prussian needle-gun. In addition, twenty-four batteries of a machine gun of ·6 calibre, known as the Mitrailleuse, were manufactured, but so careful were the French to maintain the secret of the

mechanism that the guns were hidden away in store instead of being issued to the troops.

The general staff had also carried out a share of war preparation by formulating many plans of campaign, offensive and defensive, suitable to the eventuality of rupture with Prussia.

Of these, some, considered an advance by Cologne and Hanover on Berlin; some, movements from the North Sea coast, against the Prussian capital; others dealt with lines of operation from Strasburg on Munich; for the advance of 200,000 men from Kehl and Neu Brisach, through the Black Forest, on Nuremburg; or, from the same places, on Wurzburg; or, again, from Strasburg, Neu Brisach, and Hunigen, on Ulm. [See Map 1.]

A more important document was a defensive plan of campaign, drawn up by General Frossard, tutor to the Prince Imperial, and it was this which, to a great extent, was followed in 1870.

General Frossard began his work with an enquiry into the probable actions of the Prussians, and consequently at once adopted a mentally defensive attitude. Would the Prussians wait upon the French movements, endeavouring to fathom the French plans, or would they at once invade France?

The latter seemed the more likely course, and this Frossard attributed to the Prussians.

The next consideration was the most probable line of invasion, and rejecting hypotheses, such as advance through Belgium, or by Southern Alsace, he concluded that the enemy would march by Northern Alsace and Lorraine.

Geographical factors were next dealt with, and in this category the French General considered railways leading to the Rhine, points of crossing over that river, and railways and roads westwards into France. [See page 63.]

From geography he proceeded to calculations of how many men the Prussians would put into the field, fixing the number at the commencement of war at 470,000. Of

these he believed 160,000 might be deployed on the Saar and 80,000 on the Lauter, facing southwards.

In answer to this hypothetical deployment, General Frossard proposed to place 60,000 men near Strasburg, 60,000 in Northern Lorraine as left wing, 140,000 on the Moselle west of Saarbruck, a first reserve of 120,000 at Reims and Chalons, and second reserve of 90,000 in Paris and other garrison towns.

Under this arrangement it was argued that the French right could be moved up to Woerth to resist the Prussian left, the French centre could meet the Prussian right at Saarguemines and Saint Avold; and, if the Prussians invaded via Thionville, the French left could occupy the fine position of Fontoy. [See Map 2.]

In case of defeat in the first actions, many positions were available east of the Moselle in which to check the enemy's advance.

Frossard's plan, therefore, was purely defensive; he argued from a preconceived idea of the enemy's plan, and his best hope was to meet him, by whichever line he advanced, with about equal forces; he completely surrendered initiative, made no provision for striking at the enemy in decisive strength, and relied for success on the illusory advantages of positions.

McMahon, to whom Frossard's views were submitted, adopted a different standpoint, suggesting that the French would be better advised not to accept battle on the frontier, but, pivoting on Metz, Strasburg, etc., to fall on the enemy's flank and rear as he advanced.

Nothing seems to have come of these projects, and France remained in her state of unreadiness for serious war, though political tension did not relax.

As early as 1867 the question of the neutrality of Luxemburg almost brought France and Prussia to blows. The quarrel was, however, patched up, apparently to the advantage of France, for after its settlement the Emperor Napoleon informed General Lebrun that the French must

push on their peace preparations so as to avoid being caught unprepared, as in the late crisis.

Soon afterwards Napoleon and Lebrun set to work to draft what would now be called mobilization tables, which were drawn up to show that France could put into the field three armies of 150,000 men each, with 900 guns in all.

War preparations then again languished, until, in 1869, the Emperor, consequent on a visit to Paris, of the Austrian Archduke Albert, the victor of Custozza, began to consider the possibility of an Austro-Franco-Italian alliance against Prussia.

Early in 1870, therefore, General Lebrun was sent to Vienna to concert with the Austrians a plan of campaign against the Prussians.

The result of Lebrun's mission was a proposal that one French army, of twelve divisions, should advance from the line Saarguemines-Hagenau on Mayence, apparently to cover the junction of another French army, of eight divisions, with the Austrians at Nuremburg. This completed, the three armies would march on Berlin—that is, presumably, unless the Prussians in the meanwhile beat the Mayence detachment. At the same time the French, and perhaps the Danish fleet, would threaten the Prussian coast-line, thus forcing the enemy to detach.

The project was under discussion by the two Governments, when the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern to the Spanish throne produced the crisis which resulted in war.

In 1868, a revolution in Spain had deprived the Bourbons of the throne. For the next two years the question of a successor to the Bourbon ruler remained unsettled, a considerable party favouring the Prince of Hohenzollern, cousin of the King of Prussia, whilst another section, supported by the French court, wished to place on the throne the eldest son of the deposed Bourbon king.

Finally, early in July, 1870, the throne was offered to and accepted by the Hohenzollern prince.

This incident gave much umbrage to France, and, on July 6th, the Duke of Grammont, Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in the Chamber, that the "French did not believe that respect for the rights of a neighbouring people imposed on them the obligation of suffering a foreign Power to place one of its own princes on the Spanish throne, thereby disturbing, to French detriment, the balance of power in Europe, and endangering the interests and honour of France."

The next day, Marshal le Boeuf, War Minister and Commander-in-Chief designate, with Generals Lebrun and Jarras as Staff Officers, commenced active preparations for war.

July 11th. At first measures were taken with the idea of mobilizing under the Emperor's scheme for three field armies, but, on July 11th, Napoleon decided to collect only one army, which he would himself command.

This army was to comprise seven corps and the Guard; the 1st Corps being commanded by Marshal McMahon, 3rd Corps by Marshal Bazaine, 6th Corps by Marshal Canrobert, 2nd Corps by General Frossard, 4th by General Ladmirault, 5th by General Failly, 7th by General Felix Douay, and the Guard by General Bourbaki.

On July 11th the War Minister addressed a warning to general officers commanding districts to prepare reservists' recall papers, and to be ready for instant action.

At this period, and probably for political reasons, the French army was organized on a non-territorial basis, and though a modified form of conscription obtained, men enlisted for, or were enlisted in regiments quartered far from their native province. Mobilization stores, too, were only kept in certain places, which naturally hindered rapid expansion from peace to war footing, for, on being called up, reservists proceeded to their depôts to receive uniform, etc., and were then sent to join their units wherever they might be.

Only four corps were formed in peace time, the Guard,

the 2nd Corps at Chalons, 3rd at Paris, 4th at Lyons. The remaining troops were grouped in districts and sub-districts, the Garde Mobile being, on paper, given a similar organization.

Of infantry, there were apparently one hundred regiments of the line, each possessing, in peace, three battalions 600 strong. On mobilization, the establishment was increased to 800, and to each regiment a fourth battalion was raised. These fourth battalions were, however, as a rule grouped into provisional regiments.

Of light infantry, Chasseurs, Tirailleurs, etc., there were seventeen battalions.

The cavalry consisted of thirty-three regiments of six, and thirty regiments of five squadrons, one squadron in each regiment forming a depôt. [See also Appendix I.]

On July 14th, there were with the Colours in France, July 14th.
325,000 men, in Algeria 60,000 men, in Rome 5500 men, holding this city, which had been taken in 1868–9 from Garibaldi.

On August 1st the total troops available amounted to:—Infantry, 375,000; Cavalry, 57,000; Artillery, 56,000, with guns—horse 228, field 756, foot 360; Engineers, 11,000.

The Reserves were called out on July 14th, as well as portions of 1863–1866–1867–1868 conscript contingents.

July 12th saw instructions arrive in Algeria for the embarkation of all troops belonging to the field armies.

With July 15th came orders for the units detailed to July 15th.
compose the 7th Corps to move to Belfort, for those of the 5th Corps to concentrate at Bitche, both corps drawing their men from the South of France and from Lyons. The Algerian troops, designated as the 1st Corps, were to go to Strasburg, the 2nd Corps to St. Avold, the 3rd Corps to Metz; the 4th Corps, reformed of regiments from Lille and North of France, was sent to Thionville, the 6th Corps troops were to assemble at Chalons, and the Guard was to move to Nancy.

These dispositions, which may be termed the preliminary

deployment, seem to have been made with the idea of safeguarding the whole frontier, as a prelude to the invasion of Germany contemplated by the Emperor, and perhaps to co-operating with the Austrians.

Believing that his armies could mobilize in fourteen days, whereas it was calculated that the enemy could not deploy any considerable force on the Saar in less than seven weeks, Napoleon was revolving a plan for the passage of the Rhine below Strasburg, with the object of advancing eastwards so as to separate the North from the South German States. To this end he proposed eventually to concentrate two corps at Strasburg, three corps and the Guard at Metz, and two corps at Chalons as reserve.

Regarding these dispositions, it may be remarked that the relegation of two corps to Chalons was contrary to the principle of concentration of effort, whilst the Emperor's ideas appear to have been too nebulous and unformed to command success.

When making plans of strategy or tactics the factors for consideration are many and various, but undoubtedly the first to be dealt with is the object in view, for on its decision will depend the course of the campaign, or action.

In respect of the French object, Napoleon might have argued that it was known that the military strength of France was not superior to that of Prussia alone, and would be considerably inferior to that of a combination of German states, unless France could either gain allies or detach waverers from the Prussian cause. The aim of the French Government should therefore have been the attainment of such an early and important success as would be best calculated to further its purposes.

Politics would have rendered undesirable invasion, by France or Prussia, of neutral territory, and would have made each anxious to carry the war into the enemy's country.

Owing to topographical factors the area between Mayence and Strasburg was the most probable seat of war.

The Emperor believed that he could mobilize, in fourteen

days, seven corps, or about 220,000 men, and that the Prussians could not deploy large forces on the frontier in less than seven weeks. Still the 7th, 8th, and 11th Prussian Corps could probably collect in a much shorter period.

Time and space considerations would have shown that the success of an invasion of North Germany from the sea-coast was improbable.

Advance via Belgium or Switzerland was politically unsuitable; besides, the former would have been slow, though the Prussian armies might have been drawn northwards, and the latter would have been eccentric.

There would have remained invasion of South Germany, with the object of approaching Austria, and advance into North Germany.

A move into South Germany would have been wide of the enemy's centre of gravity, and therefore, if for no other reason, unwise.

The last alternative would have been invasion of North Germany. This could have been undertaken through the Palatinate, but the country was not easy, and the Rhine crossings were well fortified; or in the neighbourhood of the Lauter, where the topography was more favourable, and German fortresses were few.

Here, then, would appear to have been the most suitable locality in which to operate. Invasion on this line would have interposed between the North and South German States, and the Rhine once passed, advance could have been made towards the Main—that is, on to the flank of the probable Prussian line of march into the Palatinate.

France should, therefore, have so deployed her troops that they could, most advantageously, have crossed the Rhine near its junction with the Lauter. The frontage here would, however, have been restricted, so that it might have been necessary to have thrown a detachment across the Rhine in the neighbourhood of Rastatt, in order, by marching down the right bank of the river, to open, for the remainder, points of passage in the Palatinate.

Deployment should be where it is not liable to interruption, and since it is not possible to calculate with certainty whether the initiative will be obtained, the arrangement of the troops should be suitable either to offensive or defensive strategy.

Deployment should also be such that the enemy cannot accurately forecast the plan of operations, and should be in localities where means of communication and supply, and obstacles, natural or artificial, can be utilized to the best advantage.

A plan of campaign should not attempt to anticipate events subsequent to the first serious collision with the enemy.

To make the best use of its railways, the French army must deploy at or near Metz and Strasburg.

Bearing in mind the above conditions, it would seem that deployment might have been made along the frontier, from St. Avold to Weissemburg, and thence to Hagenau. But north of the centre would have lain the obstacle of the Hardt Mountains, astride which the troops must have advanced, and the corps would have been so near the frontier, that, if caught unprepared, they would have had only the alternative of retirement, or battle at a disadvantage.

The line Bitche to Strasburg would also have been too far advanced, and in this, as in the former case, the plan of campaign would have been reasonably obvious from the dispositions.

A third alternative would have been deployment between the fortresses of Metz and Strasburg, with the disadvantage that the centre would have rested on the Vosges and the hills north of Luneville; the attitude would be somewhat defensive, and the troops, when they advanced, must, for some days, have moved astride the Rhine and the Hardt Mountains.

On the other hand, flanks would have been secure, the deployment would probably have been uninterrupted, the army would have been based on the centre and south of

France, and could have been supplied by two lines of rail; it would have faced the enemy's most probable line of march, and, if thrown on the strategical defensive, could have attacked the enemy's columns as they advanced either astride the Hardt Mountains, or in the relatively restricted spaces between these hills and the Rhine or Moselle.

This line of deployment would seem, then, to have been, on the whole, the most advantageous, and if the cavalry, in two masses, had been placed on the frontier, supported by detachments of the three arms, the Germans would, in all likelihood, not have deployed west of the Rhine.

The French fleet could have cruised off, or attacked the North German coast-line, so as to induce the enemy to detach.

II

WHATEVER may, theoretically, have been the most suitable areas of deployment, the French actually continued the movement of troops eastwards to the Metz and Strasburg districts, and pending the arrival at the front of the Emperor, Bazaine, on July 17th, on reaching Metz, where his corps was assembling, took up provisional command of all units on the frontier.

July 19th. On July 19th war was declared, after some abortive negotiations, at Ems, between the King of Prussia and the French delegate, Count Benedetti, during which the former refused to promise that the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern, who, in the interval, had resigned his claim, should not be renewed.

At this period the French Army Headquarters seem to have believed that the Germans would deploy behind the Rhine, but Bazaine remarked to Frossard that soon he hoped to have accurate information of the enemy's intentions, when he would be able to form his own plan.

Thus, from the very beginning of affairs, the mental attitude of the French leaders was defensive, and they were ready to follow the German lead rather than impose on them their will.

July 24th. About July 24th the Germans abandoned Kehl, blowing up the bridge, whereupon General Ducrot, commanding 1st Division, 1st Corps, urged on McMahon, who had arrived at Strasburg, the necessity of crossing the Rhine, and of constructing bridgeheads at Kehl and New Brisach.

The latter refused, but it is possible that had this course

been adopted, the Emperor, who as yet had come to no fixed plan of operations, would have resolved on an immediate offensive, when a decisive battle might have been fought near Mannheim.

On 24th, the 3rd Corps, less one division, moved from Metz to Boulay, a division of the 4th Corps occupied Bouzonville, two divisions and headquarters of the 5th Corps marched from Bitche to Saarguemines, and the third from Hagenau to Bitche. The Guard arrived at Metz.

Marshal le Boeuf, late War Minister, and now Chief of the Staff to the Emperor, also reached Metz, where he found, to his horror, that the army instead of being, as had been reported, completely ready, was far from well organized for war, that mobilization was progressing badly, and that the arsenals, believed to be replete with every requirement, were lacking in many respects.

About July 22nd Le Boeuf enjoined vigilance on all corps, and directed reconnaissance to be made, but qualified this order by a caution that reconnaissance must not be aggressive, though permission was given to cross the frontier.

Frossard was also ordered, all too late, to organize a system of spies, for any such scheme, to be of real value, must be arranged in peace time.

During the period immediately subsequent to the declaration of war, the French information pointed to the adoption of a defensive attitude by the Germans, bridges being blown up by the enemy, rails removed, boats on the Rhine scuttled, etc.

On July 20th, 20,000 Prussians were reported at Rastatt, large forces between Mayence and Coblentz, and 40,000 men at Dudweiler, near the Saar R. On 24th, Prussians were heard of near Saarbruck and Landau, and about this time Prussian reconnoitring parties began to cross the frontier in many places.

The French heard, on 26th, that 160,000 South Germans had mobilized, and that on the Rhine were 290,000 men, July 26th.

whilst 450,000 were in all between Rastatt and Cologne. On 27th the bulk of the Prussians were said to be at Mayence, the 3rd Corps above Coblentz, and, from a French newspaper, the organization of the Prussians into three armies, and the names of the army commanders, were made known to the French Headquarters Staff. [See Map 3.]

July 28th. On 28th the French believed 20,000 men to be at Homburg, 20,000 at Dudweiler, probably of the 7th Corps; the 8th Corps to be at Saarlouis, Saarbruck, Ottweiler, Lehbach, St. Wendel, and Tholey. [See Map 2.]

It was thought the Germans would invade in three armies, a right wing under Steinmetz, a centre under Prince Frederick Charles, a left, of the troops from the Southern States, under the Crown Prince Frederick. The bulk of the Prussians were understood to be about Mayence, the Crown Prince near Rastatt.

Napoleon, having appointed the Empress Eugenie regent, reached Metz, with the Prince Imperial, on the evening of July 28th. Here he heard that his army mustered barely 200,000, and that equipment and stores of all kinds were lacking. [For dispositions, see Appendix II.]

On the other hand, active negotiations were still in progress with Austria and Italy, so that there was yet hope that numerical superiority would not rest with the enemy.

July 29th. On 29th information pointed to the existence of a strong centre at Mayence, which was pushing detachments towards the Saar and Lauter.

The Emperor now went to visit General Frossard, to see for himself the state of the army, and it is worthy of note, that on the previous day, Bazaine had issued orders for reconnaissance of roads leading to the frontier, and as to route marching, but no important military movements were even contemplated.

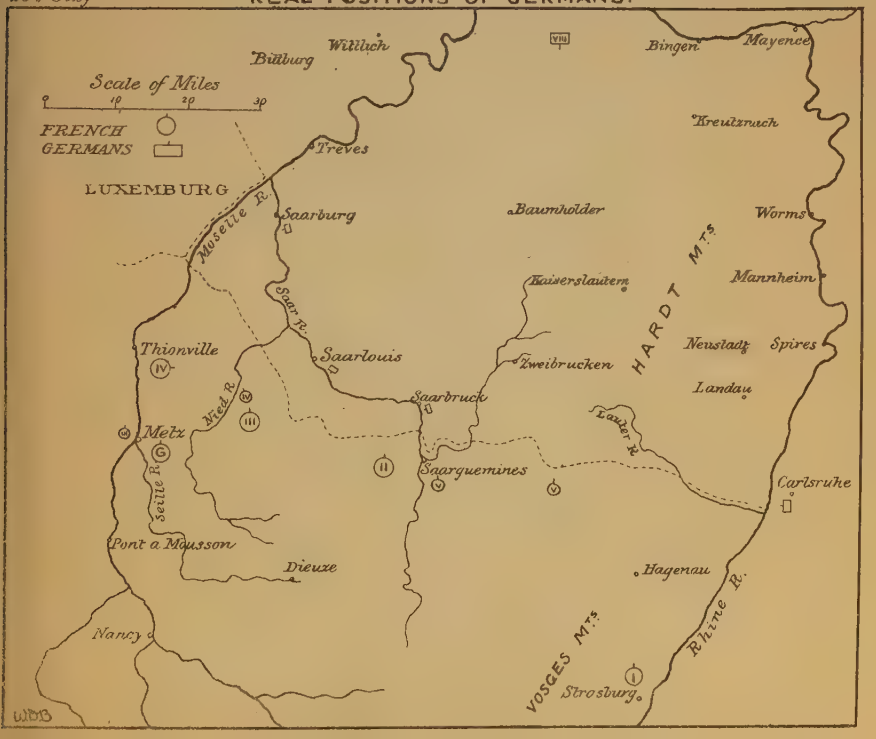
The unpreparedness of the French Army was probably, to a great extent, accountable for the lack of energy dis-

26th July

SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF GERMANS.

26th July

REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



played at this period in obtaining information by means of reconnaissance. The Intelligence Division had news of great activity on the Rhine, and of movements towards the Saar, the 3rd Prussian Corps was thought to be at Lehbach, large numbers were believed to be behind Saarlouis and Saarbruck, and 25,000 to 30,000 men between Landau and Neustadt. The Crown Prince was known to have arrived at Carlsruhe. Yet all this information was of little value, because calvary was not used to confirm the reports.

On July 30th the Emperor was still in a state of hesitation. Politically he did not care to forego the offensive, actually he found that his troops were not fit to move. He could not advance, neither could he bring himself, as some of his advisers wished, to form the bulk of his army on the strong position of Cadenbronn, near St. Avold, ready to give battle opposite the mouth of the Saarbruck gateway into France. July 30th.

As a result of his wavering, the Emperor, as is often the case, finally decided on a half-measure, viz. on the operation which has been termed a reconnaissance in force towards Saarbruck, but was, in reality, rather a design to interrupt and disconcert the German deployment.

The 2nd and 3rd French Corps were therefore ordered to advance on 31st, the 2nd to move its headquarters to Morsbach, and its divisions to Oeting, Bening, Forbach ; the 3rd its headquarters to St. Avold, and divisions to Haut Homburg, St. Avold, Ham sous Varsberg and Boucheporn. The 4th Corps was to march on July 31st and August 1st, headquarters to Boulay, and divisions to Bouzonville, Boulay, and Coume.

On the evening of 30th, the French army covered, it may be noted, a frontage, from Belfort to Sierck, of 125 miles with some 200,000 men. These extended dispositions had, in the first instance, been obligatory, owing to the direction of the railways leading to the frontier, and could even now be maintained because of the distance of the Germans from the French line.

On 30th the French thought that the German armies were grouped as follows:—

A Left Army under the Crown Prince, with headquarters Carlsruhe, consisting of the Guard, the 5th Corps, the Baden and Wurtemburg Divisions, with one Bavarian Corps. A Centre Army, under Prince Frederick Charles, with headquarters at Mannheim, of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 12th Corps, with one Bavarian Corps. A Right Army, under General Steinmetz, of the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th Corps. The 6th and 11th Corps could not be traced, but the 1st and the Saxons were believed to be moving westwards by rail. 40,000 men were reported at Dudweiler, the 2nd Army was stated to be marching, the 3rd Army to be astride Rhine at Maxau. The Guard was to leave Berlin between 29th July and 1st August. At Lauterburg a Prussian patrol had appeared, and 20,000 Prussians were reported near this place. In fact the information pointed to massing of men on the line Treves-Wittlich, at Mayence, at Mannheim, near Spires, at Carlsruhe, and behind the Black Forest. [See Map 4.]

July 31st. At 11 a.m. on July 31st, a council of war, presided over by Marshal Bazaine, was held, when it was decided that, owing to the inability of the army to make a sustained advance, the French offensive must be limited to the occupation of the left bank of the Saar at Saarbruck, which would, it was hoped, induce the Prussians to show their hand in respect of the troops reported at Dudweiler.

On this day the units of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps moved nearer to the frontier, each division marching independently, as if in peace. Meanwhile the cavalry, 12,000 sabres in Lorraine, remained inactive, though there was no mass of Prussian cavalry fit to oppose its march. The French Headquarters Staff seems, in fact, to have been too much perturbed by the Prussian force reported at Dudweiler to think of other matters.

On 31st the French believed that the Germans were massing about Treves, Mayence, Landau, and probably behind the Black Forest; that a strong force of 100,000

FRENCH
GERMANS
Scale of Miles.
0 10 20 30
Wittlich
Bittburg
X
IX
Treves
LUXEMBURG
Saarburg
Moselle R.
Baumholder
Bingen
Mayence
III
II
Kreutznach
Worms
IV
Mannheim
Kaiserslautern
HARDT Mts.
IIB
Spires
Neustadt
Germersheim
Landau
IV
Thionville
Saarlouis
VIII
Zweibrucken
VII
Saarbruck
III
II
V
Saaguemines
Lauter R.
V
Carlsruhe
B
18
W
G
Metz
Pont a Mousson
Seille R.
Dieuze
Saar R.
I
Hagenau
Rhine R.
VOSGES Mts.
Nancy
Strasburg
W.D.B.

FRENCH
GERMANS
VII
Wittlich
Bittburg
Scale of Miles.
0 10 20 30
Bingen
Mayence
III
Kreutznach
IX
VIII
Treves
LUXEMBURG
Saarburg
Moselle R.
VIII
Baumholder
Worms
Mannheim
IV
Kaiserslautern
HARDT Mts.
IV
Thionville
Saarlouis
Zweibrucken
Neustadt
18
Spires
Germersheim
Landau
XI
IIB
V
Saarbruck
III
II
V
Saarguemines
Lauter R.
8
W
Carlsruhe
G
Metz
Pont a Mousson
Seille R.
Dieuze
Saar R.
I
Hagenau
Rhine R.
VOSGES Mts.
Nancy
Strasburg
W.D.B.

men held the Saar, from Saarlouis to Saarbruck, but that no supporting troops were in this neighbourhood.

The Emperor therefore decided to crush, on 2nd, a portion of these advanced troops, but without assuring himself, by means of cavalry, of their presence and dispositions.

Since the declaration of war, negotiations had, as has been stated, been actively proceeding between France, Austria, and Italy, but the latter Powers seem to have realized the weakness of the French, for pleading unreadiness they still sat on the fence, though an offer of active co-operation in September, was now made by both nations, in exchange for the cession of Rome, occupied by French troops, to Italy. This was, however, refused by Napoleon.

On August 1st orders were issued to the 2nd Corps to take possession of the heights overlooking the left bank of the Saar. The 3rd and 5th Corps were to assist by making demonstrations above and below Saarbruck. The general idea seems to have been that the troops should take up positions if the enemy was met, but not to attack, the French at this time being fully impressed with the idea that the recent improvements in firearms favoured the defensive. August 1st.

Meanwhile the mobilization and equipment of the French army was proceeding slowly, but the troops round St. Avold found increasing difficulty in obtaining supplies, for, owing to the relatively close concentration of the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Corps, who were living on the country, the neighbourhood was becoming exhausted.

The cavalry reconnaissances, scarcely pushed beyond the outposts, obtained little or no information, but the intelligence service located, near the Rhine, the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 10th German Corps, which would, it was believed, cross the river near Bingen and Mannheim, and move on Saarbruck and Saarlouis. Part of the 11th Corps might, it was thought, reach Treves on August 1st or 2nd.

Twenty-five thousand men were now understood to be holding the Saar between Merzig, Saarburg, and Conz,

12,000 to be at Treves, and part of the 7th Corps near Saarbruck.

On the whole it was believed that the Prussians were in three masses, one in the neighbourhood of Landau, Maxau, and Germersheim, of about 160,000, the second between Mayence, Kreutznach, and Mannheim, also 160,000, the third along the Saar and somewhat isolated. Columns of all arms were known to be on the march towards the Saar, through the defiles of the Hardt Mountains.

The French could, at this period, in one day, have concentrated four Corps on the Saar, whilst the Guard was not far off.

They might, therefore, have struck at the enemy's troops believed to be on the Saar, with four Corps, and the Guard, whilst collecting, near Reichshoffen, the 1st and 7th Corps. Having driven back the Germans from the Saar, a containing force might have been left near Neunkirchen and Homburg, with the bulk of the cavalry, whilst the remainder moved, if necessary, about sixty miles, to meet the Germans invading from Landau and Germersheim. These McMahon could have watched, showing, in the first instance, activity with his cavalry, so as to deceive the enemy as to the French project; but he should not have engaged in serious fighting, for, so long as their advance did not prejudice operations on the Saar, the further the Germans marched into Alsace the more sure would be their eventual ruin, if the French gained a considerable victory in the Palatinate.

August 2nd. On August 2nd, the 2nd Corps drove the German advanced posts, about three battalions, four squadrons, and one battery, across the Saar.

The French remained on the left bank of the river, as arranged, not even sending cavalry across. Perhaps they were so surprised at finding no large Prussian force in the neighbourhood, that they hesitated to commit themselves further.

The operations of the 5th and 3rd Corps were quite ineffective, no enemy being encountered. In the case of the

latter, Bazaine himself took command of a regiment and a battery, sent to Wolklingen on reconnaissance duty.

The 4th Corps, likewise, despatched battalions to reconnoitre towards Shreckling, Ittersdorf, and Merten, which returned after exchanging a few shots with small parties of Germans.

Yet all these movements and operations brought the French but little knowledge of the enemy, for which they were almost entirely dependent on their intelligence department, whose information led to much the same conclusions as in the evening of 1st.

Meanwhile, McMahon, following the Emperor's express wish, proposed to bring his corps closer to the Northern Frontier of Alsace, a division of the 7th Corps being, at the same time, moved to Strasburg.

On the evening of 2nd the French forces, now known as the Army of the Rhine, were distributed as in Appendix II.

In Lorraine the positions of the French Corps were hardly modified on August 3rd. Frossard made a few changes in the arrangement of the 2nd Corps, and, under orders from Bazaine, who seems still to have exercised some executive command over the corps near the frontier, reconnoitred roads, by Carling, across the Longeville and St. Avold Woods. The 4th Corps was directed to reconnoitre in force, on August 4th, to Saarlouis, and to show itself nearer the frontier, but its commander construed this order into an instruction to take up a position near Berus. The 1st Corps was, on 4th, to have moved north and north-eastwards on Hagenau, Lembach, and Weissemburg, but hearing of the presence of Bavarians at Landau, McMahon ordered the 2nd Division and Septeuil's Cavalry Brigade to advance to Weissemburg on 3rd, and Ducrot to support the 2nd with the 1st Division, placing both, with Septeuil's Cavalry Brigade, under Ducrot's orders. The result of this arrangement was the isolation of the 2nd Division. Of the 7th Corps, two divisions were ordered to move, next day, from Belfort and Colmar, to Strasburg. August 3rd.

In view of the known proximity of the Germans, McMahon would have been well advised had he collected the troops under his orders, in suitable positions, but not too near the border, for advance or retirement. At the same time the bulk of his available cavalry should have been sent across the frontier, and towards Landau, to find out the strength and dispositions of the enemy.

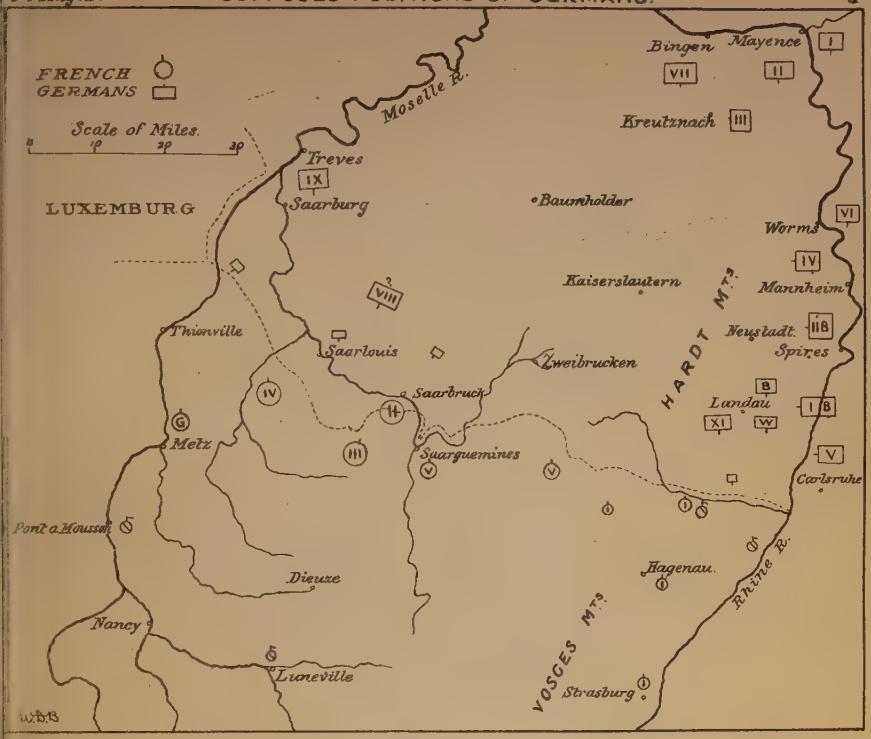
On August 3rd, the French Headquarters Staff was aware that masses of German troops were marching through Treves, and that there was a considerable hostile force at Conz. Germans were stated to be moving on Sierck and Saarlouis, and prisoners made at Saarbruck, bore testimony to the weakness of its garrison. The 11th Corps, the Wurtemburgers, and Badeners, were reported to be in the Palatinate, and near Landau. On July 31st the 10th Corps had not left Hanover.

On the whole, however, the French Headquarters did not believe the Germans capable of an early offensive. [See Map 5.]

August 4th. The French army was experiencing, on August 4th, all the disadvantages of the strategical defensive, and its chiefs, distracted by constantly conflicting reports of the enemy's movements, were unable to concert a definite plan of action. Nor were their fears allayed by the notification of the defeat, on this day, at Weissemburg, of McMahon's 2nd Division.

News also came in during the night of the 3rd–4th, of 40,000 men marching from Treves, on Thionville, or on Saarlouis. The reconnaissance of the 4th Corps was therefore countermanded, but its commander was directed to take defensive measures, and to push out cavalry patrols, and was informed that, in case of attack, he would be supported by the 3rd Corps, and possibly by the Guard, which was moving from Metz.

Later, the Emperor received fresh information, which made him believe that an attack on the 4th Corps was improbable; he therefore, a second time, cancelled the orders issued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Scale of Miles.
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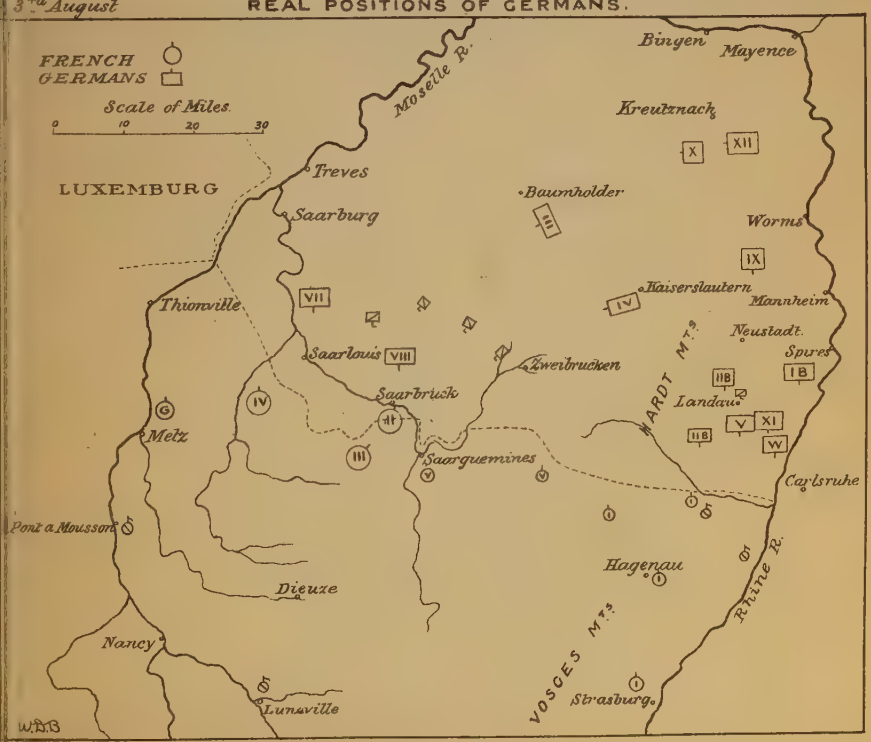
Thionville
Saarlouis
Saarbruck
Metz
Saarguemines
Pont a Mousson
Dieuze
Nancy
Luneville
Baumholder
Kreutznach
Bingen
Mayence
Worms
Kaiserslautern
Mannheim
Neustadt.
Spires
Zweibrucken
HARDT Mts.
Landau
Carlsruhe
Hagenau.
Rhine R.
VOSGES Mts.
Strasburg
W.B.R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Bingen
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Worms
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Mannheim
Neustadt.
Spires
Zweibrucken
HARDT Mts.
Landau
Carlsruhe
Hagenau
Rhine R.
VOSGES Mts.
Strasburg
W.B.R

to this unit. Bazaine, too, had made some dispositions to assist the 4th Corps, which were also subsequently changed.

Frossard, with the 2nd Corps, near Spicheren, was, however, directed to retire on St. Avold, if the French were attacked by larger forces than had been reported near the Saar, an instruction almost impossible to execute without disaster, if battle was once joined.

Meanwhile, General Lebrun having represented to the Emperor that the army was dangerously disseminated, the latter at once decided to concentrate the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps near Boulay, with the Guard as reserve. This arrangement would have massed the troops somewhat too closely for manœuvre, whilst the area chosen was wooded and enclosed, but one portion of the French army would no longer be exposed to defeat in detail. The plan was soon changed, and the 4th Corps was ordered to Boulay, the 3rd to St. Avold, the 5th to Bitche, the 2nd Corps remaining at Spicheren, and the 3rd Cavalry Division moving to Falquement.

During the night of August 3rd–4th McMahon heard, from Belfort, of 6000 Wurtemburgers moving on Lorrach. He, therefore, suspended the march of the 1st Division, 7th Corps, on Strasburg, leaving, in that town, a Brigade of his own Corps.

McMahon was also notified, by the French Headquarters Staff, that the Germans, near Landau, were about to take the offensive; he therefore warned Douay, at Weissemburg, to this effect.

Douay, however, took no proper steps to safeguard his troops, for, on morning of 4th, he was surprised and beaten, at that place, by the Advanced Guards of the 3rd Prussian Army. Ducrot's Division, marching from Reichshoffen on Lembach, came on the retreating troops some miles west of Weissemburg. At the same time the 3rd Division 1st Corps was moving from Hagenau to Reichshoffen, and the 4th from Strasburg to Hagenau, so that most of McMahon's troops were marching one behind

the other on the same road, and by no means in battle formation.

On the news of Weissemburg, McMahon ordered the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divisions, Reserve Artillery, and Cavalry Brigade, to Reichshoffen, and the 4th Division to Woerth, and called up, by telegram, the 1st Division 7th Corps from Colmar and Mulhause. He would have been better advised to have concentrated all troops under his orders to oppose the Crown Prince's Army.

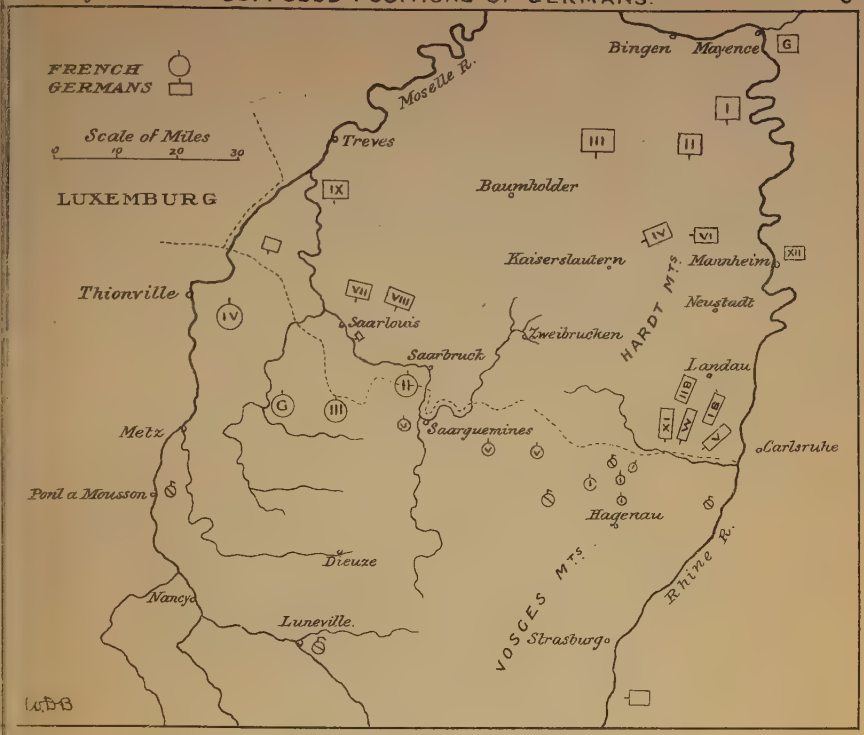
On hearing of the disaster of Weissemburg, the Emperor again changed the instructions issued to the troops in Lorraine, the 4th Corps being sent back to its former positions, and the Guard to Metz.

Of further information which came to hand during the day, the following were the principal items. The reports of German concentration towards and above Saarlouis were confirmed; Bavarians, with Cavalry, were known to be north of the Lauter. From McMahon came news of 150,000 men on the Upper Rhine [really 2000 or 3000], and in the Cologne Gazette were printed the numbers of the Prussian Corps ordered to the front, with an estimate of their strength.

Coupling these items with the intelligence already received, the French concluded that portions, possibly the advanced guards of the 3rd Army, which was 160,000 strong, had reached Weissemburg; 40,000 men, probably of the 7th and 8th Corps, were north of Saarlouis; 160,000 troops, belonging to six corps, were on the Rhine, near Bingen, or were marching towards or through the Hardt Mountains. [See Map 6.]

In these circumstances the Emperor's mind again reverted to thoughts of an offensive into the Palatinate, but the project was abandoned on the representations of the Quartermaster-General that the country could not support the French troops.

The distance from Weissemburg to Saarbruck is 60 miles, through hilly wooded country, possessing but few roads.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Scale of Miles
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Thionville
Metz
Pont a Mousson
Nancy
Luneville.
Dieuze
Treves
Moselle R.
Bingen
Mayence
Baumholder
Kaiserslautern
Mannheim
Neustadt
Landau
Zweibrucken
Saarlouis
Saarbruck
Saarguemines
Hagenau
Carlsruhe
Strasburg
HARDT Mts.
VOSGES Mts.
Rhine R.
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FRENCH
GERMANS
Scale of Miles
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LUXEMBURG
Thionville
Metz
Pont o Mousson
Nancy
Luneville
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Treves
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Bingen
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Kaiserslautern
Mannheim
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Landau
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Saarlouis
Saarbruck
Saarguemines
Hagenau
Carlsruhe
Strasburg
HARDT Mts.
VOSGES Mts.
Rhine R.
IV
VII
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XII

The bulk of the troops who on August 1st had been near Bingen, must still have been 30–40 miles from Saarbruck, and could not quickly traverse the Hardt Mountains, whereas the 40,000 men reported north of Saarlouis could not be further than 15–20 miles from, at any rate, three French Corps. It would seem, then, that Napoleon could, with reasonable prospect of obtaining at least a local success, have collected the Guard, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and part of the 5th Corps, for the purpose of advancing into the Palatinate, sending the mass of his cavalry towards the Hardt Mountains to discover the strength of the Germans in this neighbourhood, and directing McMahon first to make a show of advancing, so as to confuse the enemy, then to fall back slowly before the 3rd Army.

An alternative, suggested in the official account compiled by the French General Staff, is that the French should have held the Saar with the 2nd Corps, collected the Guard and 4th Corps at Faulquemont, brought the 6th Corps to Han sur Nied, and opposed the 3rd German Army with the remainder, that is, with the 1st, 5th, and 7th Corps, about 60,000–70,000 men, against a force estimated at 160,000, and actually about 120,000–130,000 strong.

In accordance with the last of the Emperor's orders issued on August 4th, the troops in Lorraine marched, in great heat, on 5th, as follows: the 3rd Corps to Saarguemines, Puttelange, Marienthal and St. Avold; the 4th Corps to the neighbourhood of Boulay; two divisions of the 5th Corps began their march towards Bitche, which was not completed owing to the exhaustion of the men; the Guard moved to Courcelles Chaussy, and Forton's Cavalry Division reached Faulquemont. The 6th Corps was directed to move from Chalons to Nancy on the 5th, infantry by rail, cavalry, guns, and engineers by road. August 5th.

On the representations of Frossard, who was alarmed at the exposed position of his corps, permission was granted him to fall back, on 6th, to Forbach and St. Avold. But, on reports, during 5th, of large numbers of the

enemy in the vicinity of the Saar, the French General drew back his men, in the evening of that day, from Saarbruck to Forbach, occupying what he described as an impregnable position on the Spicheren heights; but leaving the bridges over the Saar intact and unguarded.

The result of these movements was, on the whole, to disperse rather than concentrate the army, though the enemy was believed to be approaching.

Owing to the inexplicable inactivity of the Cavalry, the French infantry were, moreover, continually harassed by calls to arms on the appearance of a few German scouts, or as the result of alarmist reports brought in by peasants.

On August 5th, in reply to the report of Weissemburg, to which he added that his corps was in good position at Froeschwiller, and could undertake the offensive if another corps were sent him, the Chief of the French Staff placed the 5th Corps under McMahon, so far, only, as military operations were concerned. McMahon, therefore, ordered the 5th Corps to Reichshoffen as soon as possible. Failly replied that he could only send one division, it being necessary to retain one division at Bitche, to extend a hand to his 3rd Division moving on Rohrbach, which he feared might be attacked during its march.

The 1st Division of the 7th Corps arrived at Reichshoffen, by train, on the afternoon of 5th, and during the night of 5th–6th, and moved to Woerth, leaving behind its artillery, which was unable to detrain.

McMahon, with this reinforcement, and including the 2nd Cavalry Division, had therefore collected round Froeschwiller, about 43,000 men with whom to give battle, but, owing to the fatigue of the troops, no trenches were made, nor were villages even put into a state of defence. The officers, too, received no information regarding the enemy, or as to their own leaders' intentions, from the time of arrival at Froeschwiller, until the battle on 6th.

Yet McMahon was aware that a large body of German Cavalry had been turned back from Soultz on the evening

of 4th, and that a considerable force of Germans had crossed the frontier near Weissemburg; and though his cavalry showed no great activity, patrols had discovered that the enemy was in force from Gunstett to Walburg, also that there were hostile troops at Eschbach, but none at Hagenau and Reichshoffen. On the evening of 5th, McMahon heard that Failly was only sending him one division, and could, or would not join him with a second. Intending to give his troops a rest on 6th, and to retire on Lemburg on 7th, McMahon, therefore wired to Failly to entrench this locality.

On the news of Weissemburg, General F. Douay had, meanwhile, ordered the 2nd Division 7th Corps northwards, to assist the 1st Corps if necessary.

Of information, the French Headquarters had heard, in the evening of 5th, that the King of Prussia, accompanied by Prince Bismark, had reached Mayence on August 2nd; that the army which had attacked Douay on 4th was the 3rd Army, and that, according to a German paper, the 5th, 11th, and one Bavarian Corps had been present in this action; that Steinmetz had 100,000 men in the vicinity of the 2nd French Corps; that troops of the 7th German Corps were in villages between Conz and Saarlouis, and that the 8th Corps was west of Dudweiler. A spy reported that the 4th German Corps was about to concentrate at Zweibrucken (Deuxponts), and that regiments of the 3rd Corps had passed Kreuznach. From this information French Headquarters inferred that there were but few Germans on the Upper Rhine, and that the majority were in the Palatinate, and seemed about to advance to the region Saarlouis, Saarbruck, Saarguemines.

Instead of making immediate arrangements either to confirm, by massed cavalry action, these reports, or to attack the heads of the enemy's columns believed to be about to reach the Saar, or even to concentrate the army by falling back towards Metz, the Emperor was still content to leave things to chance.

Late on August 5th news came to the French Headquarters that large numbers of Prussians were marching from
August 6th. Treves on Saarlouis and Saarbruck. At 3 a.m. on 6th, Bazaine informed Frossard that the 1st Division 3rd Corps, at Saarguemines, would probably be attacked, and if so, should be supported by a division. Frossard was, at the same time, warned to expect attack. In the event, Frossard's Corps was defeated in the battle of Spicheren by the Advanced Guards of the 1st and 2nd German Armies, mainly owing to lack of support from neighbouring French troops.

Of the 3rd Corps, the 1st Division, at Saarguemines and Neunkirch, heard, at noon on 6th, heavy firing in the direction of Saarbruck, but General Montauban took no measures of any kind to ascertain the cause of the firing, nor to communicate with the units in his vicinity or with his superiors. At 3.30 p.m. this division was, however, sent by Bazaine to Gross Bleiderstroff, and directed to report for orders to Frossard. The division never reached the field of Spicheren, and after halting, at 9 p.m., near Bousbach, retired to Puttelange during the night of 6th-7th.

The 2nd Division 3rd Corps, at Puttelange, hearing, at midday, firing in the direction of Spicheren, marched northwards, and at 2 p.m. halted near Dibling. At 4 p.m., having received no news from Frossard, who seems to have been unaware of the proximity of these troops, and the noise of firing having ceased, the division returned to Puttelange, arriving at 5 p.m. Gun fire now again becoming audible, the 2nd Division marched on Theding, where, at 7 p.m., it was met by the baggage of the defeated 2nd Corps. Castagny, the officer commanding the division, therefore took up a position near Folkling, which he held until 1.30 a.m., when he returned to Puttelange.

On 6th, the 3rd Division, 3rd Corps, commanded by General Metman, sent, under orders from Bazaine, a brigade to Macheren, the remainder of the division marching on Bening, which was reached at 3 p.m., where the noise

of battle at Spicheren was audible. Metman took no measures to obtain information, and, at 4 p.m., was ordered by Bazaine to occupy a position between Bening and Betting. At 7.30 p.m. Metman received a request for support from Frossard, and moved on Forbach, which his advanced troops reached at 10 p.m. Hearing of the disaster, the 3rd Division then retired to Puttelange.

The 4th Division, 3rd Corps, under General Decaen, remained in position near St. Avold, one regiment only being sent, by Bazaine, in the evening, and by train, to assist Frossard, and this unit helped to form the rear-guard. The cavalry of the 3rd Corps effected nothing, neither did Forton's 3rd Cavalry Division, which had come up from Metz.

Of the 4th Corps, the 1st Division, and one brigade of cavalry, moved to Teterchen, the 2nd Division to Boucheporn, the 3rd to Coume, the remainder being at Boulay. In the evening General Ladmirault was ordered to march, on 7th, one division to St. Avold, the other two to Boucheporn.

Meanwhile the Guard was directed towards St. Avold, and the 6th Corps began to move, by train, on Nancy, but was soon ordered back to Chalons.

On the morning of 6th, McMahon, influenced by the representations of his divisional leaders regarding the precarious condition of his force, and overlooking the fact that it is as difficult to issue from as to attack a defile, was about to order the troops to retire on Lemberg, with the idea of holding a position in the hills to menace the right of the Prussian advance.

The battle of Woerth, however, began before the order was drafted.

After a hard fight, the 3rd German Army, but mainly the 5th and 11th Corps, crushed the French, who fled, in the evening, in disorder, on Saverne and Bitche. The retreat was covered by a small rear-guard, hastily organized by General Ducrot, which was joined, near Niederbronn, by Lespart's newly arrived 3rd Division of the 5th Corps.

The Germans did not pursue with any vigour.

Early on 6th, the Emperor had reverted to his idea of an offensive movement into Rhenish Bavaria with his whole army, but in the evening he telegraphed to Bazaine to secure the retreat of the 2nd Corps and to call up the 4th Corps. Apparently no earlier, or at least no definite orders, had been sent to Bazaine.

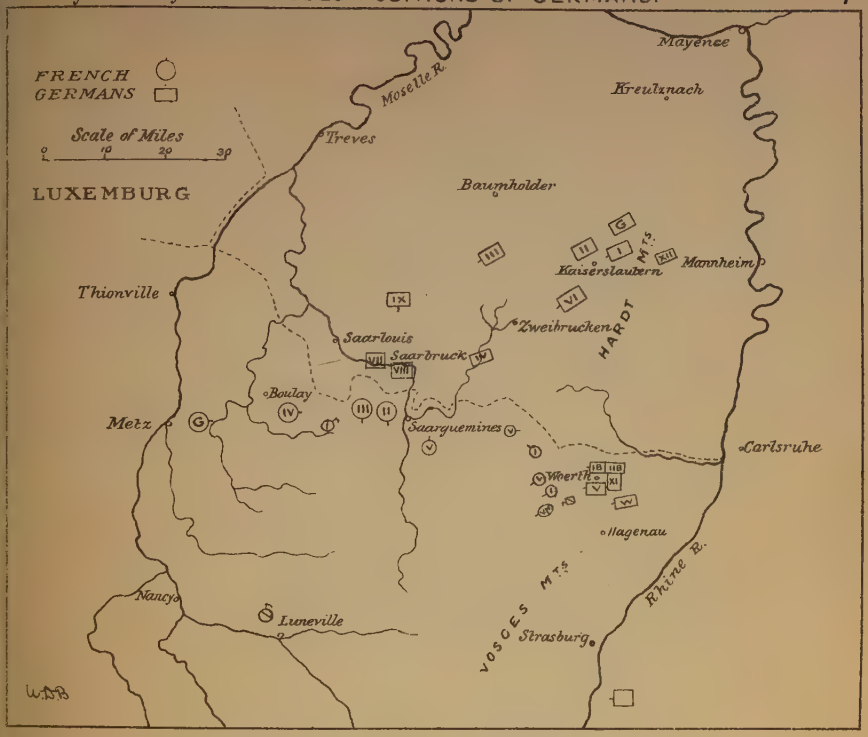
During the night of August 6th, the French Headquarters heard of the battle of Spicheren, where it was believed that three German Divisions, the 13th, 14th, and 15th, had fought, and of McMahon's disaster at Woerth, where it was known that he had been much outnumbered.

Presumably it could, therefore, have been argued that Frossard had been beaten by the 7th and 8th Corps, and McMahon by the Crown Prince's Army, estimated at 160,000 men, or by part of it.

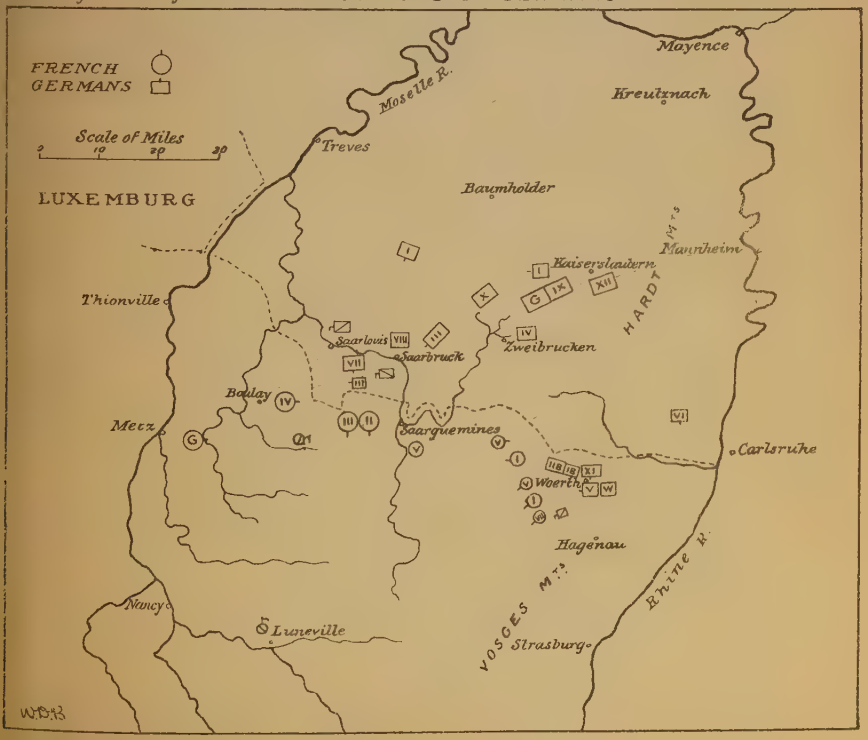
It was known, on 5th, that portions of the 4th German Corps were within fifteen to twenty miles of Saarbruck, and these would probably, meanwhile, have closed up towards the Saar, and would have been followed by the troops previously reported near Bingen, though the latter could not rapidly clear the Hardt Mountains. At the same time the French had again heard of a large German army south-east of Strasburg, and between Hunigen and Mulhause, and if this report was correct, the forces in the Palatinate could not be overwhelmingly superior.

On the French side the 1st, 2nd, and parts of the 5th and 7th Corps had been defeated, but the 3rd, 4th, Guard, and two-thirds of the 5th Corps were intact, and the three former were well placed to attack the German troops who had fought at Spicheren. Had such attack been made, it is probable that the 7th and 8th German Corps, no longer in condition to fight a serious battle, would have been forced across the Saar, and the French would have gained a respite to collect and deploy anew their armies. [See Map 7.] But the Emperor could hardly have suspected the opportunity that awaited him, and to have advanced would have

Evening of 6th August SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



Evening of 6th August. REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



required the calculating daring of the first Napoleon. In the circumstances, the Emperor, since Paris was now fortified, would have been well advised had he left Metz to its garrison, and destroying the bridges over the Lower Moselle, reassembled his army near Nancy, prior to a fresh campaign based on the South of France.

August 7th. On August 7th the Emperor, however, decided to concentrate his forces at Chalons, where he could collect 250,000 men, and directly cover Paris. The Cabinet demurring to this proposal, it was abandoned, and the 1st, 5th, and the portion of 7th Corps, which had been at Woerth, were ordered to Chalons. At the same time the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and Guard were to fall back to Metz, and the rest of the 7th to remain at Belfort. All 4th battalions were to be summoned to Paris, making, together with various other disposable units, a total of 100,000; and the 6th Corps was to move to Chalons and Paris, to form a nucleus on which to organize the fresh levies, and to maintain order in the capital.

McMahon's troops reached Saverne on the morning of 7th, and on report of pursuit by the Germans, marched off again, at 5.30 p.m., on Phalsbourg.

The 5th Corps (less one division with McMahon and one brigade with the 2nd Corps) marched to Petite Pierre on the evening of 6th, arriving next day. Here it received orders to retire behind the Marne, and join McMahon.

At 5.30 a.m. on 7th, General Douay, commanding the 7th Corps, was ordered to send a division to Strasburg, keeping the remainder at Belfort. As Douay had already sent a division to McMahon, he decided to concentrate his troops at Belfort.

The 2nd Corps had, on 7th, reached Puttelange, where it received orders to retire on Metz.

Of the 3rd Corps the 1st Division was at Puttelange, the 2nd Division at Guenwiller, the 3rd Division at Puttelange, the 4th Division and Cavalry Division remained at St. Avold, and Forton returned to Folschwiller.

Of the 4th Corps the 2nd Division marched to St. Avold,

where it was attached to the 3rd Corps. The 1st Division moved on Boulay, the 3rd Division on Hestroff, the cavalry, etc., remaining at Boulay.

The Guard marched back to Longeville.

The information received on 7th was scanty and vague, but the Headquarters Staff learnt that the enemy had not advanced from Spicheren, and the presence of a large hostile force south-east of Strasburg was contradicted.

III

ON August 8th the 1st Corps arrived, much disorganized, at Saarbourg, and 5000 to 6000 footsore men were at once sailed to Toul. Some ordnance stores and equipment were now obtained, in part repairing the losses experienced at Woerth. August 8th.

The 5th Corps continued its march on Saarbourg, sending cavalry towards Bitche to try to secure the withdrawal of heavy baggage left there; after a slight skirmish with German cavalry the enterprise was abandoned on an unconfirmed report of large numbers of the enemy at Rohrbach, Lorenzen, and Saar Union. The loss of this baggage obliged the troops to resort to requisitions.

Of the 7th Corps, one division and part of the cavalry reached Belfort, and the troops from Rome arrived at Lyons. The 2nd Corps halted near Gross Tenquin, and its cavalry reconnoitred for a short distance towards the enemy, but did not obtain contact. The 3rd Corps and Guard moved in two columns along the left bank of the German Nied, the Guard leading, and the 4th Division of the 3rd Corps as rear-guard. Rain delayed the march, and the troops did not bivouac until far into night. On report that the Germans were turning the French left, the 4th Corps even made a night march to the left bank of the Nied.

During the night Bazaine received instructions to concentrate, as soon as possible, at Metz, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and Guard Corps, all now placed under his orders.

Finding the troops a good deal exhausted, he asked and obtained permission to halt on 9th. At the same time Imperial Headquarters warned him that his left might be

attacked, and ordered him to make extended reconnaissances with his light cavalry, but to remember that his object was to bring to Metz, as soon as possible, the Guard, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps. In reply Bazaine suggested that it would be better to march on Nancy, in order to concentrate with the 1st, 5th, and 7th Corps, but the Emperor dismissed this project with the remark that the capital would be uncovered.

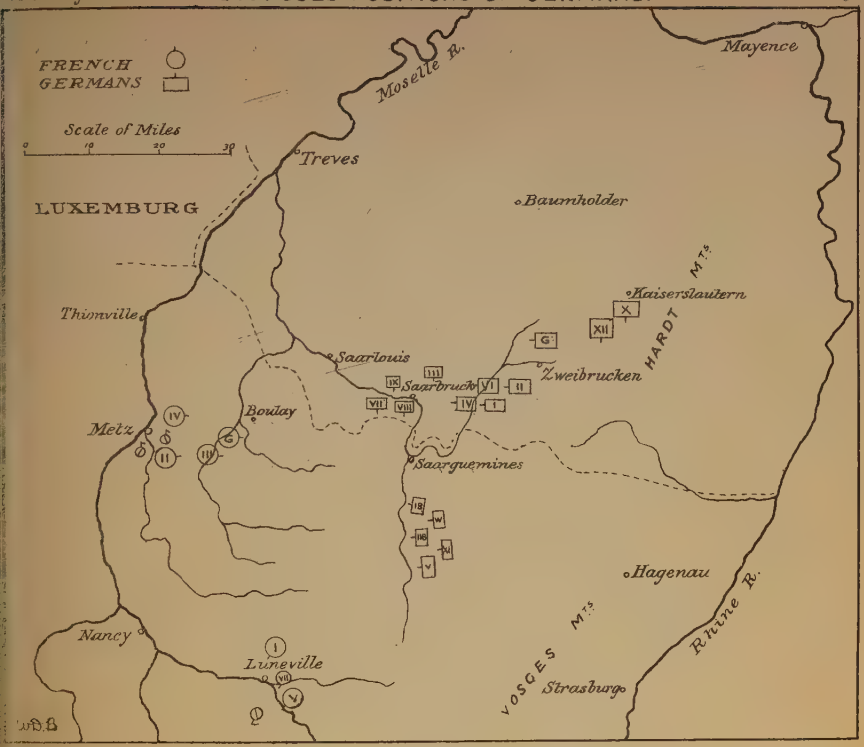
After further correspondence, it was decided to accept battle, on 10th, on the Nied, in a position from Pange northwards, the 6th Corps being called to Metz, by train, and the remainder moving into their places on 9th, in spite of their exhaustion.

August 9th. Meanwhile the 1st and 5th Corps had continued their retreat, the commander of the 5th Corps receiving orders from the Emperor to march to Nancy, and thence on Metz. But Failly, fearing to be anticipated at Nancy by the Germans, decided to move via Luneville, though he made no efforts to discover the whereabouts of the enemy.

On 9th, the French Headquarters had but scanty information of the enemy. The French cavalry was either inactive or brought little reliable news, usually reporting only peasant rumours. Statements of spies and secret agents, however, tended to show that 300,000 to 400,000 men were invading France, though whether all were advancing on Lorraine, or 100,000 into Southern Alsace, was not clear.

August 10th. On August 10th Imperial Headquarters heard from a spy, at Basle, that there were still 70,000 German troops in the Black Forest, a report which no doubt decided the Emperor to keep the 7th Corps at Belfort, though undoubtedly he should have massed every possible man at Metz.

From the same source came news that the German armies were three in number, of 70,000, 200,000, and 180,000 respectively, and that Headquarters and 100,000 men were at Kaiserslautern or Saarbruck.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Zweibrucken
Metz
Boulay
Saarguemines
Hagenau
Rhine R.
Nancy
Luneville
VOSGES MTS.
Strasburg

FRENCH
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Scale of Miles.
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Zweibrucken
Metz
Boulay
Saarguemines
Hagenau
Rhine R.
Nancy
Luneville
VOSGES MTS.
Strasburg

The Crown Prince was said to be advancing on Nancy, the 1st Army to be between Sulzbach and Saarbruck, the 2nd between Homburg and Blieskastel.

Other reports inclined the French to believe that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected, but that a force would march through Luxemburg.

News of the presence of German scouts came from all directions.

On this information, though he had now 40,000 men behind the Nied, the Emperor, fearing to have his right flank turned from the direction of Saar Union, decided to withdraw to the protection of the forts round Metz, without leaving even a rear-guard, or any of his numerous cavalry, to delay and gain contact with the enemy. Had the Emperor used his cavalry to locate the positions of the enemy's forces, he might have discovered that the German right wing of the 1st, 3rd, 7th, and 8th Corps was somewhat in advance of the remainder, and might, therefore, be attacked without much risk of envelopment by superior forces, whereas success would probably gain for the French the respite so urgently required. [See Map 8.]

In spite of rain, and of the weariness of the troops, the retirement began early on 10th.

Whilst these retrograde movements were in progress, the 1st and 5th French Corps continued their retreat on Luneville, but hearing, on arrival there, that the advanced guard of the 3rd German Army was already at Chateau Salins, McMahon, without confirming the report, decided to move south-west on Neufchateau, and away from the forces at Metz, reporting his resolution to the Emperor, and ordering trains to be ready at Neufchateau to convey the troops to Chalons. At the same time a large number of men who had become sick owing to hard marching and bad weather—for the troops had, as a rule, bivouacked—were sent by train from Luneville.

The Chief of the Staff now heard of Failly's refusal to proceed via Nancy, and telegraphed an order to him to do so

if possible. Failly thereupon, after consulting McMahon, decided to move on Nancy, but apparently made no effort to discover the real position of the Prussians, beyond sending an officer on an engine to Dieuze, who found no Prussians at that place and could hear of none at Chateau Salins. Later, Failly, fearing to march down the Moselle with the Germans on his flank, again changed his mind, and decided to follow the 1st Corps.

August 11th. On August 11th, in pouring rain, the 3rd, 4th, and Guard Corps marched to Metz, the Guard moving into a position as general reserve. The 2nd Corps, already on or near its alignment, received instructions to reconnoitre with its light cavalry, both by day and night, for several kilometres towards the enemy. Of the 6th Corps, the 3rd Division reached Metz, but the destruction of the telegraph wire between Frouard and Pont-a-Mousson, delayed the railway trains in which were troops of the 1st Division. The movement of the 2nd Division 6th Corps was stopped by order of the Empress.

The Cavalry Divisions of Barail and Forton sent out reconnoitring parties from Metz. Neither met the Prussians, and instead of establishing contact, the troops returned to their bivouacs.

The French intelligence on 11th pointed to the German advance in three distinct bodies.

On the right 100,000 men were believed to be moving along the Luxembourg frontier on Thionville, in the centre were eight corps under Steinmetz and Prince Frederick Charles, the heads of the columns being on the line Saarlouis—Saar Union. On the left was the Crown Prince, with 150,000 men, marching through the hills north of the Vosges, and perhaps detaching a corps to join the central army. The enemy reported on the Upper Rhine appeared to have moved on Rastatt, but the Governor of Strasburg expected an immediate investment.

The Germans were thus believed to number 450,000 men, against 212,000 French, including the 5th and 7th Corps.

The enemy seemed to be moving so as to envelop the troops near Metz, who should therefore have fallen back towards the Upper Moselle, to join McMahon, and at the same time reach a position whence, with the South of France behind them, they could attack the German left.

On 11th, the 1st and 5th Corps continued their retreat, the latter deciding definitely not to attempt to reach Nancy, but to march, via the Argonnes, to Chalons or Metz. A report to this effect was made to the Emperor. In reply, Failly was directed to move at once on Toul, but the telegram did not come to hand until 12th.

Whilst disaster had been dogging the French field armies, Parliament called to arms all single men, and widowers without children, of age between twenty-five and thirty-five years; volunteers of all ages were asked for, and the whole of the 1870 conscript contingent was summoned to the Colours; a credit of £1,000,000 was also voted to support the families of those serving in army. At the same time a loan of £40,000,000 was authorized, bank notes were made legal tender, and £24,000,000 of paper money was to be issued.

In addition the National Guard was re-established.

At this juncture, pressure of public opinion obliged the Emperor, whose health was known to be precarious, to definitely abrogate executive command of the army to Marshal Bazaine, who, on 12th, was gazetted to this post. The Emperor, nevertheless, remained in Metz, hampering the new Commander-in-Chief, and appointed a General Jarras, who was not on good terms with Bazaine, and was most unwilling to accept the post, Chief of the Staff. August 12th.

About this time the Emperor was meditating whether to accept battle outside Metz, with risk, in case of defeat, of being interned in that fortress, or to concentrate his forces on the plateau of La Haye, between Dieulouard and Toul, and on the left bank of the Moselle, where his line of retreat to Chalons would be covered, and he hoped that he

would be able to stop the march of the Crown Prince's Army whilst threatening the left flank of the remainder of the German forces. Though the opinion of many of the French Generals was in favour of fighting a battle here, in spite of inferiority of numbers, rather than yielding further territory without striking a blow, it was already too late to think of standing at La Haye, where the French would, in the long run, only have been enveloped by the Germans. The Emperor consequently rejected both alternatives, and decided on withdrawal to Chalons, with the exception of one division to be left to garrison Metz.

On the evening of 12th, Napoleon, therefore, wrote to Bazaine that he considered the situation of the army critical, and, if the French were not attacked on the morrow, directed that some definite line of action should be taken. The Emperor also instructed the Metz fortress commander to establish across the Moselle as many bridges as possible, though bridging had already been begun on 9th, in accordance with a verbal order. But, no doubt to escape from the Emperor's attentions, Bazaine remained at Borny, though all his headquarters staff was at Metz, and moreover gave no orders and took no steps.

Of information a report was received from an intelligence officer, at Nancy, that hostile patrols had appeared, on August 11th, at Marhange, Chateau Salins, and Dieulouard. On 12th, this officer was obliged to quit Nancy, which was occupied, at 8.30 p.m., by Prussian cavalry and six battalions infantry. No Prussians had reached Luneville. The inhabitants of Treves had been warned to prepare for the reception of the 1st and 6th Corps, and these were believed by the French to belong to an army of 100,000 under Von Falkenstein. About Gros Tenquin and Remilly, prisoners were made belonging to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps, and to 5th German Cavalry Division not far from Mercy le Haut. A Prussian camp was reported at Tromborn, near Bouzonville, and reinforcements to be on their way across Rhine, whilst Prussian cavalry had appeared in front of

the outposts of Bazaine's force. The information, in fact, again pointed to an envelopment, by the enemy, of the French army lying in front of Metz.

Nevertheless, except for a few minor changes of position Bazaine's army made no movement, but the 1st Division 6th Corps arrived by rail from Chalons, after driving away, at Montigny, a detachment of Prussians engaged in destroying the railway.

Marshal McMahon, on account of the exhaustion of his troops, had intended to halt on 12th, but judging that his men would be safer across the Moselle, he began the passage of the river at noon.

In the evening McMahon was informed that in future he would receive orders direct from the War Minister.

During the morning Failly received the belated order to move on Toul, and made arrangements accordingly, but at 3.30 p.m. the instructions were cancelled.

Failly, therefore, decided to march south-west on Chaumont, thus avoiding further intercourse with the demoralized 1st Corps, which was to move on Neufchateau. The 7th Corps remained at Belfort, etc.

August 13th.

On August 13th, in spite of the evident seriousness of the situation, Bazaine either could not or would not realize the critical condition of the army, and spent the morning in riding round the French position, and issuing instructions in respect of such details as the position of batteries, battalions, etc. The French cavalry belonging to the various corps, showed, on this day, a good deal of activity in sending out reconnoitring parties, but instead of pushing through the German screen, all stopped when the enemy's vedettes or patrols were met, and returned to camp, apparently satisfied with their day's work.

It was discovered, however, that a hostile force of all arms was near Pange, and on the Upper Nied.

The intelligence service reported a rumour that Steinmetz, with the 7th and 8th Corps, was covering the march of the 2nd and 3rd Armies on Nancy and Pont-a-Mousson,

where they might arrive on 14th, and that 150,000 men, under Von Falkenstein, were moving on Thionville and Longwy. But another statement denied the existence of Falkenstein's army.

Nancy was known to be in possession of Prussian cavalry, who had also appeared at Marbache, at Pont-a-Mousson, and at Corny.

On the whole the information pointed to the presence of a powerful army advancing on Metz and Thionville, covering an enveloping movement via Pont-a-Mousson, Nancy, etc. [See Map 9.]

About noon, Napoleon, alarmed by these reports, wrote urging Bazaine to retire at once.

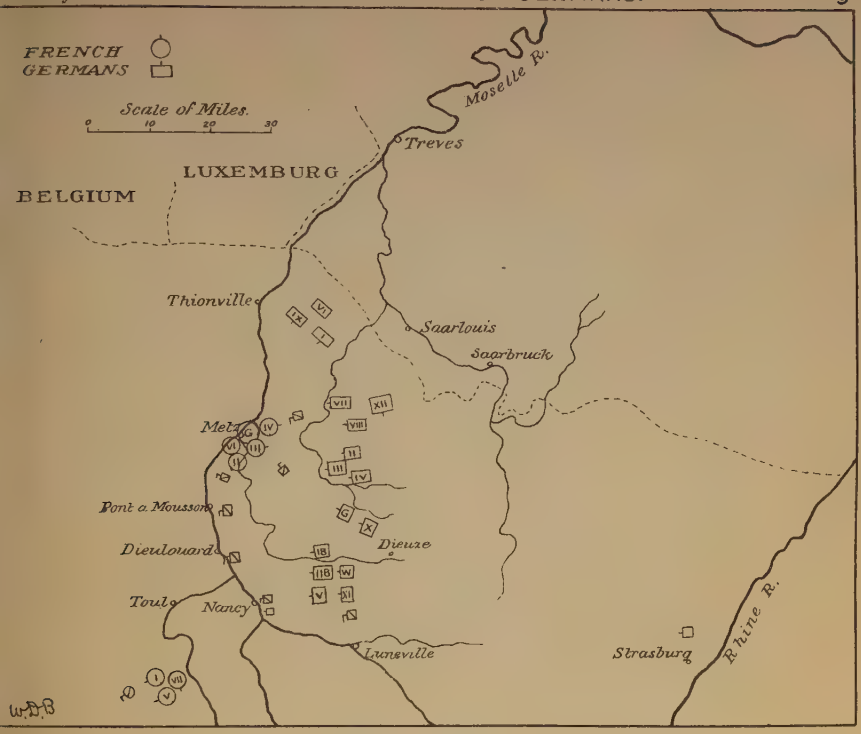
The Marshal replied that the bridges over the Moselle could not be ready until the morrow, and that supplies could not, at once, be distributed. At the same time he stated that he would give orders for reconnaissance of routes, and instruct corps to be prepared to withdraw on 14th.

Later, Bazaine wrote: "The enemy is so close on us that to fall back will be dangerous. We had better either await attack, or advance against the Germans." At the same time he directed the troops to be prepared to march at 4.30 a.m. next day.

The project entertained by Bazaine seems to have been to strike and roll up the German right, and, as he believed, covering force, a success which he hoped would bring about the retirement of the whole German army, and enable him to march up the Moselle valley to Frouard, calling in the troops of McMahon and Failly.

A check administered to the German right might have caused Moltke to converge on Metz with all his forces, but would hardly have achieved the results hoped for by Bazaine, who would probably in the end have been enveloped near the Belgian frontier.

At 11 p.m. Bazaine received another letter from the Emperor, stating that information from Paris as to the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Nancy
Luneville
Strasburg
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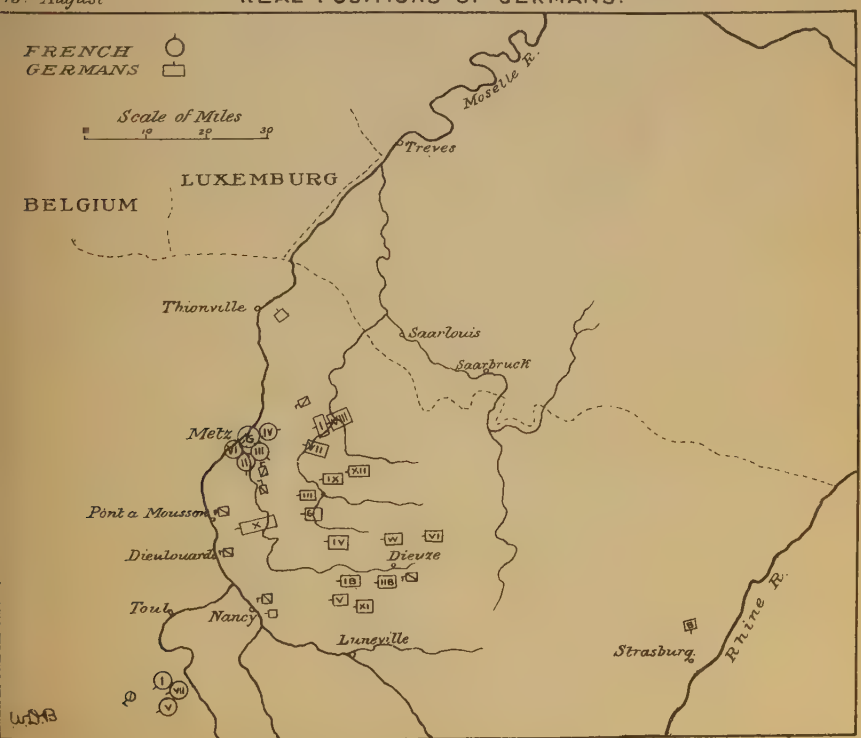
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Luneville
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German movements was such that no offensive operation which would compromise retirement should be undertaken. Bazaine, accordingly, abandoned his plan.

Finally, though Metz boasted of three permanent bridges, the retreat was postponed until the afternoon of 14th, on the plea that a rise of the Moselle had rendered the temporary bridges unsafe.

About midnight, the Military Governor of Metz reported, ready, five bridges over the Seille above Metz, three over the backwater, three over the minor arm of the Moselle, whilst those over the main river would not be finished until noon next day. Altogether the French could, eventually, have retired in seven columns, but the bridges were so close together that the troops must have issued on a narrow frontage of 2½ miles, a fact likely to have caused some delay before they could have followed their various lines of retreat.

According to Bazaine's orders, the 2nd and 6th Corps were, on 14th, to mass their baggage between Longeville and Moulins, preparatory to crossing the Moselle; the 4th Corps, its impedimenta near Maison des Planches, on the outskirts of Metz; the 3rd, and Guard, etc., at Ban.

The 2nd and 6th Corps would march via Mars la Tour, Hannonville, and Manheulles, on Verdun; the 4th and 3rd by Conflans and Etain; the Guard was to follow the 3rd, and the retirement was to begin either in the afternoon or evening.

It is clear that but little forethought had been exercised in drawing up this order, for whilst rapidity of movement was essential, such arrangement of columns could not make the march of French army other than very slow.

On 13th McMahon and Failly continued retreat in south-west direction.

On 14th the Metz troops paraded, as directed, at 4.30 a.m., though it must have been evident that they could not march for many hours. August 14th.

The baggage got under way at about 7 a.m., but owing to

bad staff work and supervision, that of the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and Guard Corps was soon inextricably mixed with the Artillery Reserve, and a serious block occurred near the Port des Mortes. On the height of Ban all was confusion, which was accentuated by the arrival, in the afternoon, of the leading troops of the 2nd Division. The baggage of the 4th Corps, moving through Metz, managed fairly well, and did not delay the march of this corps, which began about 1 p.m.

At 1 p.m. Forton's and Barail's Cavalry Divisions received orders to proceed towards the Gravelotte-Rezonville plateau, to scout well to front and flanks, and to ensure for the troops a safe issue from the Moselle defile.

The 1st Cavalry Division, Barail, reached Gravelotte at 3 p.m., and bivouacked near Malmaison; the 3rd Cavalry Division, Forton, did not arrive, owing to blocked roads, at Gravelotte until 7 p.m., when it went into bivouac.

In the evening patrols from the two cavalry divisions came in touch with Prussian cavalry patrols, and peasants reported a considerable hostile force at Ars, but no real reconnaissance was made.

Of the infantry the 2nd Corps marched slowly and painfully along roads crowded with baggage, and it was far into the night before most units reached their bivouacs. Its 3rd Division, however, was ordered into, and occupied the various forts of Metz, relieving the 3rd Division of the 6th Corps.

The latter was to have followed the 2nd Corps, but, owing to the attack of the Germans, the 1st Division 6th Corps remained in reserve all day, and, at 8 p.m., moved to Montigny; the 2nd Division, only one regiment strong, marched to the station of Devant les Ponts, which lies just west of Metz. The 3rd Division, after being relieved of garrison duty, halted near Longeville and Ruffine; the 4th Division bivouacked, after remaining under arms all day, on the Metz-Thionville Railway. The 6th Corps, therefore, owing to the block caused by the convoys, and by the position of the 2nd Corps, was scarcely able to clear its previous bivouacs.

The 3rd Corps and Guard should have followed the 4th, but could not do so, owing to the inevitable delay caused by the bad work of the French Staff, in trying to crowd masses of troops and baggage on to a few roads. At 4 p.m. the division of the 3rd Corps, which was lying near the Metz forts, had just begun its march, when the Germans attacked; at about the same time the Guard was preparing to move off, or was actually on the move, so that no rear-guard had been detailed to contain the enemy, of whose proximity there was no doubt.

The battle commenced at 4 p.m., and lasted, with varying fortune, until 9 p.m. Of the French the 3rd and 4th Corps, only, were engaged, the latter returning to support the 3rd; on the German side the 1st Army fought.

Though the action does not seem to have been the main cause of the French delays which produced the further disaster of Gravelotte, the French, who could easily have fallen back behind the Metz forts, were clearly wrong to accept battle east of Metz. The Germans, on the other hand, were somewhat bold to attack an enemy under the guns of a fortress.

On 14th McMahon and Failly continued their retreat in a south-westerly direction, the former reaching Neufchateau, where his troops began to entrain for Chalons.

During the night of 14th–15th both French and Germans withdrew from close contact east of Metz, and by 9 a.m. on 15th the 3rd French Corps was lying near Plappeville, but was unable to proceed further owing to the road being obstructed by baggage. The Guard collected between Moulins and Ban during the night, and moving off at about 11 a.m. on 15th, reached Gravelotte, and Point de Jour, which lies east of Gravelotte, between 4 p.m. and midnight. The 4th Corps fell back during the night to the left bank of the Moselle, and remained all 15th on the outskirts of Metz. August 15th.

Forton's Cavalry Division skirmished with a few German

squadrons near Mars la Tour, but made no attempt to pierce the enemy's cavalry screen.

The French army, as a whole, therefore, moved westwards but a few kilometres, owing to the block of baggage waggons, and in thirty-six hours had not covered more than ten miles.

During the morning of 15th, Bazaine, alarmed by artillery fire south of Metz, and fearing that the Prussians were about to attack his left, ordered the destruction of the Longeville railway bridge, though it was well under the protection of the Metz forts.

In the afternoon he moved to Gravelotte, where he found the Emperor, with whom he conversed regarding the latter's withdrawal to Chalons or Paris.

Such intelligence as was available inclined Bazaine to believe that he had been just attacked by the two corps of Steinmetz, that to the southward some nine Corps were moving, the heads of whose columns seemed to have reached the Moselle about Pont-a-Mousson and Frouard, where the bridges were intact. German cavalry had already appeared on the left bank of the Moselle at Briey, Vigneuilles, and Mars la Tour. About 35,000 men seemed to be advancing on Thionville. [See Map 19.]

Bazaine does not, however, appear to have seen cause for anxiety, though he knew his own army was making little or no progress.

Towards evening orders were issued that the troops were to be ready to march at 4 a.m. on 16th, that corps commanders were to report the positions of their headquarters, and that an attack might be expected on the morrow, there being at least 30,000 of the enemy close to the French left.

McMahon's Corps went on with its movement to Chalons by rail, the 5th Corps continuing to march. During the day Failly was ordered by the Emperor to entrain at Chaumont for Vitry le Francois, and was placed under McMahon's orders. A 12th Corps, under General Trochu, of half-trained

men of the 4th battalions, was now in course of formation at Chalons.

Between 4 and 5 a.m. on 16th, Bazaine was summoned to the Emperor, who announced his intention of proceeding at once to Chalons, and suggested, but did not insist, that the march of the army on Verdun should be expedited. Bazaine replied that there was no cause for hurry, and no sooner had the Emperor left, than the Marshal, apparently owing in part to the continued blocking of the roads by the baggage, issued an order postponing until afternoon the movement westwards, though he also probably intended to give his corps time to close up. In reality the delay only made matters worse by crowding a mass of men on to the already too restricted area occupied by the leading divisions. There seems no reason, however, why the French, leaving their struggling baggage, should not have quitted the roads and marched across the fields of the open rolling country, where some large woods were the only hindrances to the free movement. Soon afterwards an instruction was circulated directing all cavalry to be pushed southwards to gain information as to the enemy's forces reported to be in this direction. August 16th.

At about 9 a.m. the battle of Vionville began by the surprise, in its camp, of Forton's Cavalry Division by German artillery fire.

By nightfall the French army was in three confused masses of intermingled divisions and brigades—one, in fairly good order, near Doncourt, one near St. Marcel, the third between Gravelotte and Rezonville.

On 16th McMahon's infantry continued to entrain for Chalons, railing via Blesme, the cavalry moving so as to protect the trains. The artillery, which was marching, reached Doulevant.

The 5th Corps moved on Chaumont, with orders to proceed to Chalons by train from the former place. The railway from Chaumont was to be watched by the 1st Division, 5th Corps.

On this day Douay's 7th Corps was ordered to rail from Belfort to Chalons.

On the evening of 16th Bazaine directed his corps to retire towards Metz, in order to make good from that fortress, ammunition expended at Rezonville, and to enable a fresh issue of rations to be made to troops, who had only one day's supply in hand.

But Metz was not, as a matter of fact, well equipped to cater for the wants of the army, and Bazaine would surely have been well advised to have hurried his troops northwards, leaving one or more corps to act as rear-guard, and ordering ammunition and rations to be sent to meet the army, by rail from fortresses on the Belgian frontier.

August 17th. On 17th the French retreated, practically unmolested, covered by Metman's 2nd Division of the 3rd Corps, and by evening the various corps had fairly well assembled their units in their new positions west of Metz.

Bazaine seems to have had little or no information as to the enemy, but believed that he had repulsed the 1st and 2nd German Armies; and this idea, combined with the inactivity of the enemy, may have given him a false sense of security. No effort was made to clear up the situation by employment of cavalry. [See Map 20.]

McMahon's troops, less artillery and cavalry which were marching, arrived at Chalons and went into bivouac near the town. Failly was ordered by the War Minister to rail his 5th Corps to Vitry le François, taking measures to safeguard the railway line, by McMahon to rail to Chalons. Apparently Failly obeyed the Minister, though he heard of 25,000 Prussians at Bayon and of the same number at Charmes. Part of the 7th Corps reached Chalons.

IV

McMahon's Attempt to Relieve Bazaine

AFTER the defeats of Woerth and Spicheren, the French Emperor decided, as has been stated, that the 1st Corps and Bonnemain's Cavalry Division should retire on Chalons, and there form the nucleus of a fresh army, and that the bulk of the 5th and 7th Corps should join McMahon's force at that place.

Whilst these troops were moving on Chalons, the Government made strenuous efforts to increase the numbers in the field, summoning to the Colours all unmarried men, between the ages of twenty-nine and thirty-five, who did not belong to the Garde Mobile, and calling for volunteers to the age of forty-five, or even upwards. At the same time the recruit classes of the years 1869 and 1870 were mobilized, companies of Franc-tireurs were formed, and the National Guard revived and placed on war footing; 100,000 men were brought to Paris, and the Parisian regiments were sent to Chalons, where they proved troublesome.

Besides these levies, there were, in Algeria, about eighteen white, and nine black battalions, and three regiments of cavalry, and in France, on the Spanish frontier, twenty-one battalions and two regiments of cavalry. There were also twelve battalions of marines, and in Rome stood six battalions.

General de Montauban was now appointed War Minister. He at once created three new corps, the 12th under Trochu, 13th, Vinoy, 14th, Renault, but of these the 12th alone joined McMahon. In fine, McMahon, about August 21st, took command at Chalons of 130,000 men, grouped in four

corps, the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 12th, with two Reserve Cavalry Divisions, those of Bonnemain and Margueritte; but none of these troops were of really high quality, and neither army corps nor divisional generals and staffs were accustomed to their positions and duties, nor were the troops properly equipped, or provided with regular transport.

Busy though General de Montauban was with organizing troops to defend France, he had time to draw up two plans of campaign for the forces at Chalons. The first, assuming that the 3rd German Army would march via Vassy and the Aube River on Paris, was to pivot McMahon's army on Vinoy's 13th Corps, to be established at Ferte sous Jouarre, and then to attack the Crown Prince in right flank, via Chateau Thierry. The second was to send McMahon to the rescue of Bazaine. This General was believed to be in extremities in Metz, and surrounded by the 1st and 2nd Prussian Armies, whilst the 3rd Army was moving on Paris, and a fourth, called the Army of the Meuse, of 70,000 men, under the Crown Prince of Saxony, covered the investment of Metz from the area north-east of Verdun.

Montauban's second plan, in greater detail, was to mislead the 3rd Army, by permitting a false despatch to fall into their hands ordering McMahon to move from Chalons, via Reims, on Paris. Meanwhile McMahon was to march rapidly to Verdun, and attack the Crown Prince of Saxony. If the latter was assisted by the troops blockading Metz, Bazaine would be free to harass their rear, and the Germans would be caught between two French armies. If the Metz force continued to hold Bazaine, McMahon should have no difficulty in defeating the Crown Prince of Saxony.

This project, based on so slender a foundation as the deception of the 3rd Army by a false despatch, and attributing but little enterprise to the German cavalry, efficiency to their intelligence service, or intercommunication between the various armies, was accepted by the Cabinet, but was opposed by a committee of three generals, assembled to draw up a plan for the defence of Paris.

M. Thiers also voted against the scheme, pointing out the danger of the march, and the probability that it would merely result in the investment of both Bazaine and McMahon, if not in more serious disaster.

The War Ministry, however, replied that risks must be run, and that, in case of defeat, the French could retire through the wooded and difficult Argonnes region. McMahon, for reasons to be given later, had already, in accordance with the second project, begun his eastward march, when Mantauban conceived another plan. This was to move 60,000 men, under General Wimpffen, who had recently arrived from Algiers, to Belfort, whence the Rhine was to be crossed, and when sufficient diversion had been made in Germany, the troops were to retire on Belfort. It does not appear that the third suggestion, which had nothing in its favour, was ever very seriously contemplated.

With the three French plans that have been outlined, and the advantage of the experience of the war to guide the choice, the course best adapted to the French needs may now be considered.

Their object was to relieve, without undue risk, the pressure on Bazaine, and to give this Marshal a chance of cutting his way out of Metz. Bazaine's situation was believed to be precarious, otherwise, probably the best plan would have been to have withdrawn all troops to the south of Paris, which was fortified, and have thus obliged the Germans either to discontinue their forward march, thus gaining time, or to turn the 3rd Army southwards and away from Paris, and the support of the troops covering and blockading Metz; or, lastly, to operate both against Paris and McMahon, and therefore to disseminate their forces, when their line of communication could have been attacked, as was attempted by Bourbaki in the Lizaine Campaign.

This plan being inexpedient, it remained to try to draw off from Metz, but without incurring too great risk, as many German troops as possible. This could be accomplished by

a demonstration from the direction of Vesoul and Epinal, or by a movement on Verdun.

Against the former it could be argued that to reach Vesoul would involve a detour perhaps even through Paris, which would take time, and would permit the Germans to fortify their line of investment round Metz; but such movement might have expedited the march of the 3rd Army on the capital, and if McMahon could have got behind it, a detachment from the troops besieging Metz would certainly have been necessary to meet him. Escape, too, in case of defeat, should have been possible. On the other hand, Bazaine, if he attempted to break away to the south, would be moving where the Germans were in greatest force, though he might have embarrassed their supply arrangements.

An advance on Verdun might have caused the Germans to have taken the measures actually adopted to check McMahon, and would thus have relieved pressure on Metz. The line of march was shorter and easier than to Vesoul, and Bazaine would probably attempt to force his way out towards the north, when McMahon could quickly lend him a hand. On the other hand, the danger of being forced against the Belgian frontier and surrounded was more serious.

On the whole the last alternative would probably have been most suitable, because pressure could most quickly have been brought on the enemy, proper arrangements being at the same time made to facilitate rapid retirement westwards, so as to draw the Germans in this direction.

August 17th. On August 17th, McMahon himself reached Chalons, and conferred with the Emperor and other officers, with the result that General Trochu was appointed Governor of Paris, and McMahon commander of the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 12th Corps. It was further decided that the Emperor should return to the capital, on which McMahon's army should retire, first moving on Reims, a more defensible locality than Chalons.

August 18th. The cavalry and artillery of the 1st Corps, and Bonne-

main's Cavalry Division, continued to march on Chalons, the latter reaching this place on August 18th. Meanwhile very conflicting reports were received of Bazaine's situation, though a German advanced guard of 6000 men belonging to the 3rd Army was stated to have reached Bar le Duc.

Failly's 5th Corps continued to entrain for Vitry, but in the evening Failly was ordered by McMahon on Chalons. He was to forward his artillery and baggage, at any rate, by rail, and such guns as could not, during the day, entrain via Vitry, were to be railed via Chaumont and Paris.

The 7th Corps continued to rail to Chalons.

On August 19th McMahon's 1st Corps had practically concentrated at Chalons. The 5th Corps had cleared Chaumont, and the units who had been guarding the railway as far as Blesme, had withdrawn. August 19th.

The 7th Corps continued its movement on Chalons.

Failly reached Chalons on August 20th with two divisions, and the leading trains carrying the 7th Corps began to arrive at Reims in the evening. August 20th.

McMahon, hearing that Bazaine was on the line Gravelotte to Amanvillers, and that the Germans were holding the roads to Briey, Verdun, and St. Mihiel, now decided to remain with the bulk of his men at Chalons, pending information as to Bazaine's line of march.

Later, on receipt of news that the advanced scouts of the 3rd Army were twenty-five miles from Chalons, McMahon changed his mind and gave orders for retirement on Reims, whilst the parks were moved to Paris.

Leaving Bonnemain, supported by one battalion, at Chalons, the French, on 21st, marched, or rather straggled to Reims, for the day was hot, and settled down in close quarters round this town, as if prepared for battle. August 21st.

Meanwhile serious objections to the Emperor's plan for returning to Paris, and for moving McMahon's army thither, had been raised by the Cabinet, on the ground that a revolution would ensue, and a delegate, the President of the Senate, was sent to Reims to discuss matters. A long

conference took place with this representative of the Ministry, who urged McMahon's immediate advance to the relief of Bazaine, a course to which the Marshal was opposed. In support of his attitude McMahon stated that he believed Bazaine to be surrounded in Metz by 200,000 men, that at Verdun the Crown Prince of Saxony had 80,000, that the Crown Prince of Prussia had, east of Vitry le François, 150,000 men, and that to advance eastwards would be to court disaster to the only existing French army, which might, if carefully used, form the nucleus of larger forces. The Marshal finally advocated withdrawal to Paris, an alternative in which the Emperor, who was present at the meeting, apparently acquiesced.

August 22nd. On August 22nd a telegram was received from Bazaine describing the doubtful battle of Gravelotte-St. Privat, stating that his troops were behind forts St. Quentin and Plappeville, that he proposed to rest two or three days, and then move, either via Montmedy or Sedan, according to the German dispositions. Concluding from this report that Bazaine was already marching on Montmedy, McMahon now determined to advance to the assistance of his colleague, and sent him and the Cabinet messages to this effect.

Whilst McMahon had again changed his mind, the Cabinet in Paris had sent the Emperor a further telegram urging an advance on Metz, in accordance with the plans of the War Minister, and hinting at a revolution in case of omission to do so. The Emperor, therefore, fell in with McMahon's wishes.

Apparently, on 20th, Bazaine despatched a message to McMahon which implied a doubt as to the possibility of quitting Metz, but this never came to hand, and in the evening of the 22nd McMahon issued orders for an advance, next day, towards Montmedy.

August 23rd. On August 23rd the army of Chalons, moved in pouring rain, towards the Suippe River. Bad staff work, crossing of columns, etc., caused delays, and obliged the troops to remain, in some cases, many hours under arms before they

marched off; consequently, though only thirteen or fourteen miles were covered, and the advanced guards had marched at 4.30 a.m., the rear-guards had not reached camp by nightfall.

No troops seem to have been left in Chalons to deceive the Germans as to the French intentions, nor was any cavalry thrown out towards the south-east to cover the movement. On quitting Reims, McMahon, however, requested the War Minister to send a division of the 13th Corps to that place, in order to secure it as a base of supply.

The French had little information of the enemy, and such as came to hand was furnished only through municipal channels. It was known that the enemy was crossing the Meuse above and below Verdun, and was moving towards the Argonnes; a detachment of cavalry had reached Chaumont, another, Chalons. At Mirecourt, east of Neufchateau, was a large force of all arms, and several Bavarian divisions had passed Colombey les Belles.

The army of Chalons made a disorderly march north-east on August 24th, apparently with the idea of at once avoiding the Prussians, and being ready to assist Bazaine should he appear near Montmedy or Sedan. August 24th.

Though the men were patriotic, they had not the virtues which enable well-trained troops to bear hardships, so that the indiscipline of the French army now became very manifest; officers were insulted, country people robbed, whilst the compact formations in which troops marched, added to the discomfort of men and to their insubordination.

Again, such information as came to hand was for the most part furnished by civilian authorities.

McMahon heard that about 10,000 men, with 80 guns, had reached Consenvoye, on the Meuse, and had begun to cross that river; also that telegraphic communication between Verdun and Paris had been interrupted. But there was no news of Bazaine. Of the 3rd Army it was known that more than 100,000 men were on the line Neufchateau—Joinville—Vassy—Ligny. German cavalry had appeared

at Chalons camp, and on the Aube; and Strasburg was about to be bombarded.

During the day McMahon received a telegram from the Empress, that Bazaine must be relieved at all costs.

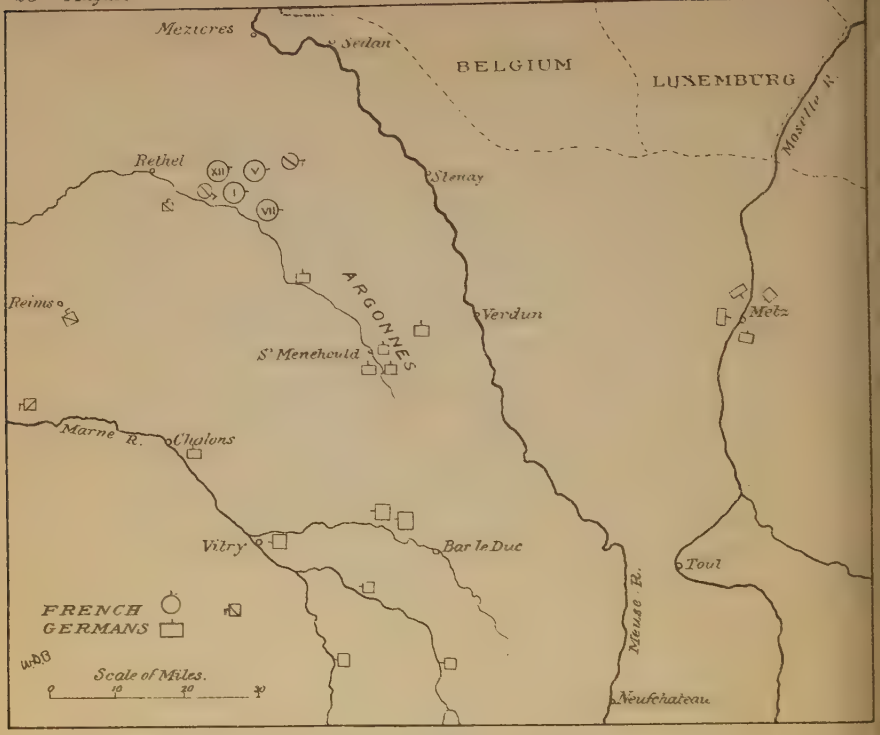
August 25th. On August 25th the French army, in close formation, made a short but badly managed march eastwards, pivoting on the 12th Corps, which remained at Rethel. Much time was spent in filling up supply columns. The Cavalry Division of the 7th Corps sent a regiment towards Varennes and across the Aire, that of the 5th Corps moved towards Le Chesne. Margueritte's Cavalry Division also reconnoitred towards Le Chesne—that is, in the direction in which Bazaine might be expected had he quitted Metz.

McMahon's information pointed to the movement of the Meuse, that is, the Crown Prince of Saxony's Army, on Varennes, whilst that of the Crown Prince of Prussia continued to advance westwards. Strasburg had been bombarded, and there were rumours of a success by Bazaine between Toul and Pont-a-Mousson.

August 26th. On 26th the French army, which on the previous day had wheeled half left, now wheeled half right, pivoting on Vouziers, so as to face Montmedy. This change of direction may have been due to the orders of the Empress that Bazaine must be relieved. The march was made in drenching rain, and in the usual confusion. The cavalry divisions seem merely to have covered the movement of their corps, except that of the 7th Corps, which, being pushed forward, met Prussian scouts near Varennes, and heard of a force of 60,000 Germans near St. Menehould. Douay, fearing attack, therefore took up a defensive position. The 2nd Reserve Cavalry Division reconnoitred beyond St. Pierremont.

On receipt of the news from Douay, McMahon notified the former that he would come to his assistance, though it may be remarked that no precise information had been received, except of the presence of a few Prussian scouts. At the same time McMahon made great efforts to get in touch with Bazaine, to whom he tried to send a message

26th August SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



26th August REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.

announcing that the Chalons army would not move further east without hearing of the Metz force. Besides the statement sent by Douay, McMahon had information of German cavalry at Epernay, at Sillery, and at Saint Thierry. Bodies of hostile troops were reported at Chalons and at Monthois; also at St. Dizier, Joinville, Vassy, Vitry. A German paper stated that Royal Headquarters were at Bar le Duc, and that the 1st and 2nd Armies were holding Bazaine, whilst the remainder of the Germans marched on Paris. [See Map 10.]

August 27th.

The 1st, 5th, and 12th Corps moved south-west on August 27th, to help Douay, believed by McMahon to be threatened by a large German force. Of the cavalry, that of the 5th Corps reconnoitred towards Buzancy, where a cavalry fight took place, whilst Margueritte's Reserve Division marched towards Stonne and Beaumont, meeting enemy's patrols near Nouart and Buzancy. No infantry were encountered, but McMahon, probably on hearing a report that the Crown Prince of Prussia was at St. Menehould, and that another German army was near Varennes, ordered the troops to retire on Chatillon and Brieulles, and encamp. This apparently purposeless marching and countermarching naturally had a bad effect on the army, and shows how necessary it is to act consistently on a definite plan, taking steps to obtain, at all costs, good information.

The last news received of Bazaine had been dated August 19th, but now he received further information, that on 26th, the French were still in Metz. At the same time he heard that at least 50,000 Prussians were between himself and Metz, and that the Crown Prince's Army had ceased its advance on Paris, and had turned northwards.

This news was confirmed from Vienna, with the addition that the 1st and 2nd Armies were investing Bazaine in Metz. In these circumstances McMahon determined to retire northwards, and to regain the capital via Mezieres, unless he heard that Bazaine had left Metz. This decision he endeavoured, after a conference with the Emperor, who was

still with the army, to communicate to Bazaine, via Sedan, and also notified to the War Minister.

August 28th. At 1 a.m. on August 28th, McMahon received from the War Minister a telegram, in which it was stated that to abandon Bazaine would cause a revolution in Paris, that McMahon, with forty-eight hours' start of the Crown Prince, could break through the troops opposite him, believed to be part of the force investing Metz, and free Bazaine, and that the 13th Corps would be sent to Reims as a support to McMahon.

But as McMahon had no pontoons, and as the Germans were understood to be holding the passages over the Meuse, it is not easy to share the sanguine estimate of the War Minister, whilst McMahon would have been better able to carry out the project had the 13th Corps been added to his army.

On receipt of this telegram McMahon consulted Ducrot, who, whilst admitting the danger of an eastward march, thought that the French cavalry, if massed, could hold off the Crown Prince's columns, and thus permit the Chalons army to join Bazaine.

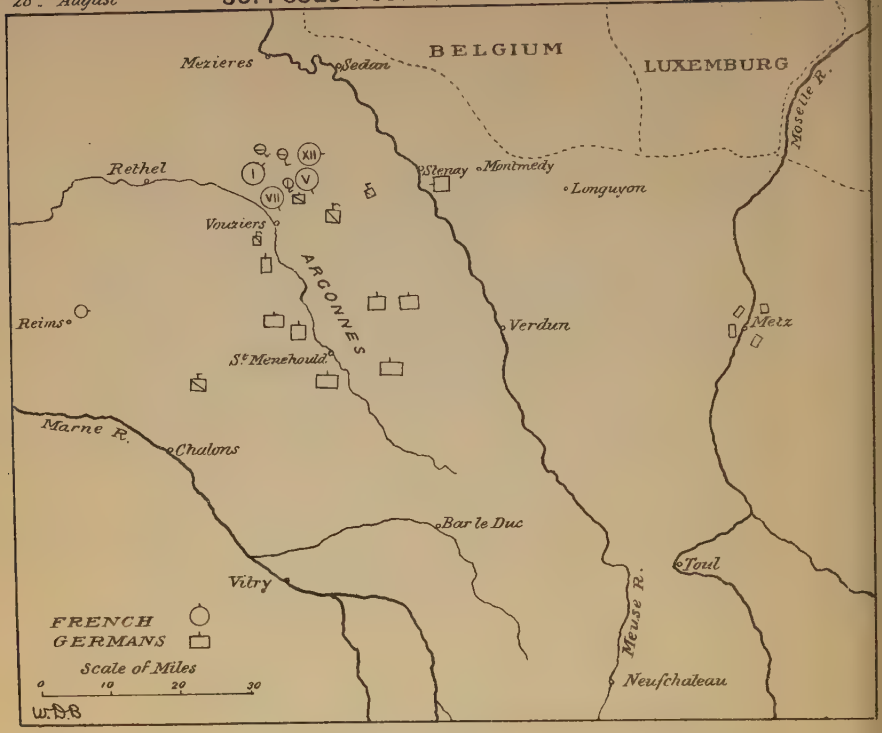
Finally, McMahon decided to march on Montmedy.

Had he attacked the Meuse Army on this day, near Nouart, he might have gained, if not a definite success, at least some advantage over the four German corps before the 3rd Army could assist them, and such policy would have been more in keeping with the War Minister's order, than continual attempts to march round the Germans. If the attack had failed, the hopelessness of attempting to relieve Bazaine would have been manifest.

Fresh orders were, however, issued for the march on Montmedy. These reached the unfortunate troops already moving, in pouring rain, in a northerly direction, and naturally caused much confusion, blocking and crossing of columns. At the same time messages were sent to Bazaine, and a telegram to the War Minister, announcing McMahon's altered plans.

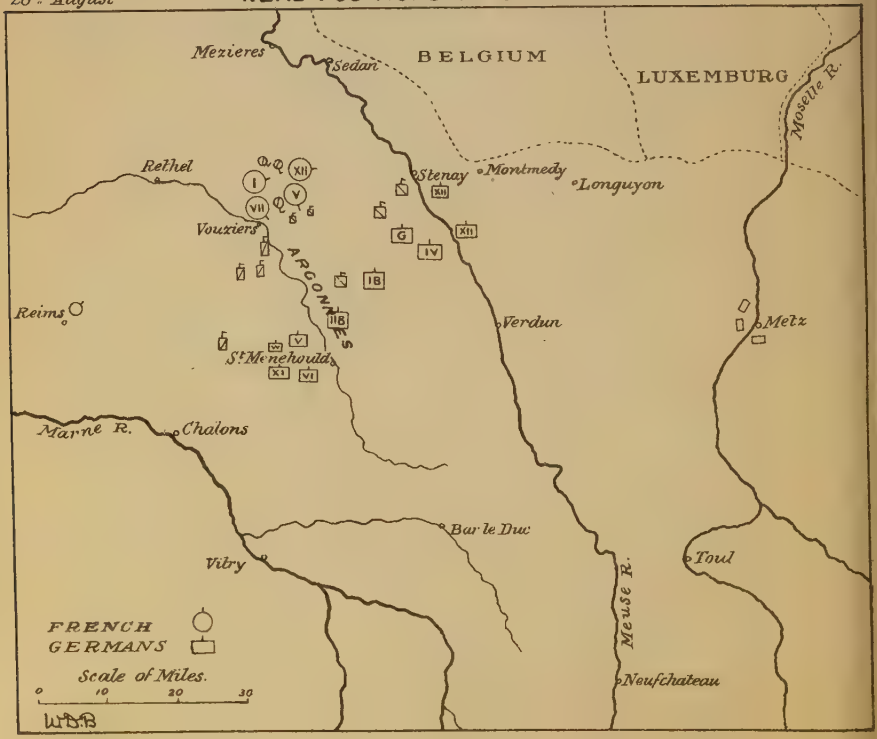
28th August

SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



28th August

REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



That McMahon was wrong admits of no doubt. The Great Napoleon wrote that a commander, rather than carry out a project he believed would be disastrous, should resign, and at the same time added that no general need, against his convictions, obey the orders of a superior not actually present.

During the day the cavalry of the 5th Corps skirmished with that of a German column, and the corps, fearing an attack, deployed for battle.

On hearing this McMahon placed the 7th Corps, still some distance behind the 5th, under the orders of the general commanding the 5th Corps, instructing Failly to cross the Meuse at Stenay as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Germans, except some cavalry, had retired across the Meuse, breaking the bridges.

Of the German movements McMahon knew that portions of the Crown Prince's Army were marching on St. Menehould and Vouziers, and that a large body of horsemen was at Souain. He was aware, too, that Mouzay and Stenay were held by 10,000–12,000 men or more, and that the bridge at the latter had been broken.

On the other hand, he was informed that a division of the 13th Corps had reached Reims, and that the corps would move to Mezieres to open his communications with the North. [See Map 11.]

The result of the wanderings of the French on the 26th, 27th, and 28th, was that the army found itself, worn out with marching and waiting, and but little nearer Montmedy; at the same time, owing to its delays, it was already in danger of being surrounded by the Germans.

On receipt of news, on the evening of 28th, as to the destruction of the bridge at Stenay, McMahon decided to cross the Meuse at Mouzon and Remilly, then to march on Carignan and Montmedy, along the Belgian frontier. Orders were accordingly issued with this object, but instead of a long rapid march, the troops, now considerably demoralized, were only asked to move twelve or fourteen miles, and the

army thus ran considerable risk of being attacked in flank by the Crown Prince when in the act of crossing the Meuse.

August 29th. The reserve Cavalry Divisions passed the Meuse, unopposed, on 29th, but the rear-guard of the 1st Corps skirmished with some Germans near Vouecq, as did the cavalry of the 12th Corps at Laneuveville, near Stenay.

The 7th Corps, warned by frontier guards and by its cavalry patrols, of the presence of a large force of Germans near Buzancy, and in the forest of Dieulet, marched cautiously, but owing to delays due to blocking of baggage, halted at Osches, instead of moving, as ordered, to La Besace.

The directions to march on Mouzon failed to reach the 5th Corps, their bearer having been made prisoner.

The 5th Corps, therefore, moved on Stenay, and its cavalry and 3rd Division had a sharp skirmish with the advanced guard of the 12th Saxon Corps at Nouart. At about 5 p.m. instructions were received that the corps was to proceed to Beaumont. Failly, therefore, withdrew, after nightfall, in much disorder, owing to the fatigue and discouragement of the men. No patrols were left in contact with the enemy, and the cavalry bivouacked in the centre of the infantry, some of whom did not reach Beaumont until 7 a.m. August 30th.

On 29th, McMahon appears to have been intent on avoiding the Germans, considering that by so doing he would expedite his march on Metz, or, if necessary, still retain the power to retire on Mezieres.

Finding the bridge at Stenay held, he would probably have been better advised to have forced the passage than to have marched round by Mouzon, for by so doing he permitted the troops at Stenay either to anticipate him at Montmedy, or to move north and cut off his line of retreat to Paris.

In the circumstances, that is, aware that he was probably opposed on the Meuse by the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, and that the Crown Prince of Prussia was fast closing on his rear, McMahon, having decided to march on

Metz, should have attacked the Germans whom he found on his right flank, in order to discover their strength and dispositions. If his attack had failed it would have been obvious that he could not continue to advance on Metz; had he been successful, he would have cleared the situation in respect of his future movements. [See Map 22.]

As it was, he made no serious attempt to gain information, and stumbled blindly on to his ruin.

McMahon's orders, for August 30th, were that his army should continue to cross the Meuse, the 1st Corps and Bonnemain at Remilly, the 5th and 7th at Mouzon, whilst the 12th Corps was to remain at Mouzon during the passage of the others. He had, at last, heard from Bazaine, that the latter was not closely invested, and was expecting the army of Chalons, and perhaps he hoped that Bazaine would throw off his torpor. August 30th.

For the passage of the 1st Corps the engineers built one bridge by utilizing the ferry boats, and another of timber obtained locally; nevertheless the corps, and Bonnemain, crossed with some difficulty, and were not clear of the river until after midnight.

At 11 a.m. the rear-guard of Douay's 7th Corps was attacked by the German cavalry and artillery, but, on McMahon's express order, and in spite of the fact that the 5th Corps was seen to be engaged at Beaumont, Douay continued his march. On nearing Raucourt he found the road covered with fugitives of the 1st brigade of his 1st division, which had been drawn into the fight at Beaumont, and fearing that the Mouzon bridge would be blocked by the 5th Corps, turned north towards Remilly. Finding these bridges crowded with troops, the corps halted, but, at 10.15 p.m., on instructions from McMahon, marched in great confusion to Sedan, which was reached on the morning of the 31st.

Of the 5th Corps, which it will be remembered retired in disorder on Beaumont on the night of 29th–30th, half was surprised, on the morning of August 30th, by the Germans, and was driven back on Mouzon. The corps succeeded in

crossing the river, but was only saved from disaster by the intervention of a brigade of the 1st Corps, which repassed the Meuse, and by the help given by the 1st Division, 7th Corps.

On hearing of the defeat of the 5th Corps, in which he believed the 7th Corps was also involved, McMahon decided to abandon his movement on Metz and to retire westwards. At 8 p.m. he ordered his army to march on Sedan, where he proposed to reorganize his troops, and then retreat on Mezieres.

The 5th Corps was to move via Carignan to Sedan, but finding the road blocked, it bivouacked at Sachy and Pouru St. Remy. Part of the 1st Corps did not receive the orders to march to Sedan, and moved to Brevilly, where it heard of the retirement and conformed. The remainder of this corps, which had been directed to cover the northward march of the army, seems to have halted near Carignan. The 12th Corps also marched via Carignan, but Margueritte's cavalry remained near Sailly, and that of Bonnemain moved with the 7th Corps. [See Map 12.]

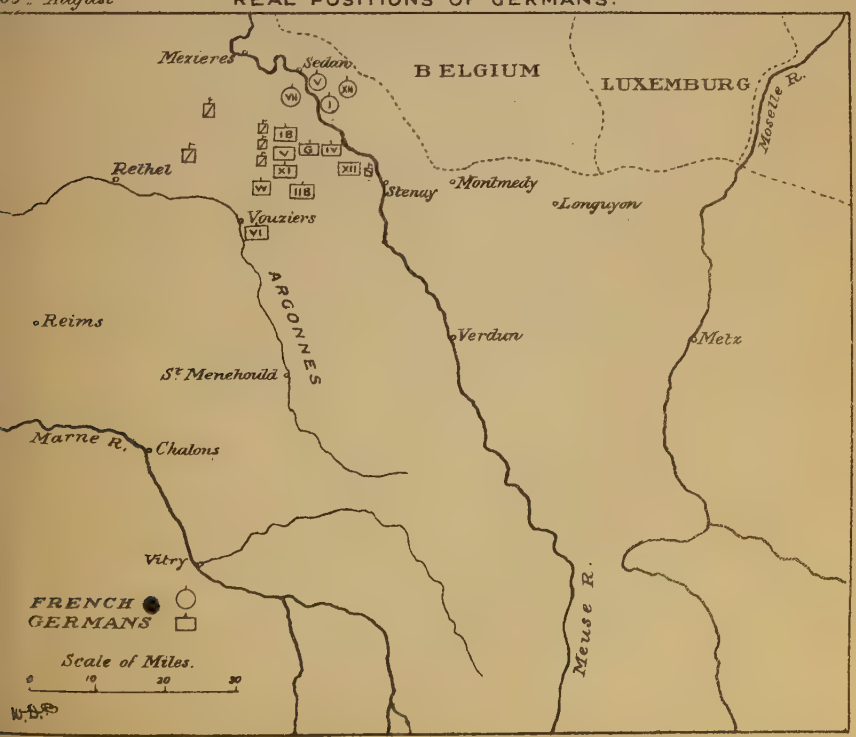
The march of McMahon's force was prosecuted in great confusion, and with many delays, which added to the weariness of the already exhausted troops.

August 31st. On August 31st the Emperor, who had been requested but had refused to move to Mezieres, was in Sedan, where he received news of the arrival at Mezieres of the 13th Corps, and ordered Vinoy, its commander, to concentrate his force, pending instructions from McMahon.

Meanwhile McMahon, in the early morning, had ridden over the ground round Sedan, and had given orders as to the disposition of his troops. Instructions were also issued for the distribution of two days' rations, all that were available in Sedan, and for issue of ammunition, and of thirty-four guns recently arrived, and intended for the 1st Corps, but no further steps were taken to extricate the army.

During the day part of the 1st Bavarian Corps captured Bazeilles, but the Germans were eventually evicted and

30th August REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.



31st August SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF GERMANS.

31st August REAL POSITIONS OF GERMANS.

driven across the Meuse by the 3rd Division of the 12th French Corps.

In the morning General Wimpffen had relieved Failly, in command of the 5th Corps. Wimpffen had recently come from Algiers to Paris, and had been sent by the War Minister to the Chalons Army, with secret orders to supersede McMahon if he showed signs of relinquishing his movement on Metz.

At 5.30 p.m. McMahon held a consultation with Wimpffen, Lebrun [who was in attendance on the Emperor], the Chief of the Staff of the 1st Corps, and an A.D.C. of General Douay, when he was informed that a report had reached the 7th Corps that a large force of Germans was preparing to cross the Meuse near Donchery, and that columns had been seen moving in this direction, both by 2nd Corps, and by look-out posts on Sedan citadel. Earlier in the day McMahon, finding his troops exhausted, and spurred on by a telegram from the Government enquiring the reason of his withdrawal, and urging an advance, had half decided to accept battle at Sedan. After the conference he seems to have, in part, reverted to his intention of retiring on Mezieres, but possessing little or no information as to the enemy's strength and movements, he remained undecided. Beaumont had not shown the German numbers, only a few cavalry and guns had, except at Bazeilles, appeared in front of the French positions, though clouds of dust had been observed near Donchery. The Marshal, therefore, believed himself to be opposed merely by the Crown Prince of Saxony's Army, and thought that he could march down either bank of the Meuse at his leisure. [See Map 13.]

Before finally making up his mind, McMahon ordered Margueritte's Cavalry Division to reconnoitre eastwards, and also sent two officer's patrols in this direction; and so the 31st passed without issue of orders to the French, who, if not retiring, should at least have taken vigorous measures to discover the enemy's strength and dispositions.

Sept. 1st. On the morning of September 1st, the 12th Corps occupied a position facing south and east, Bazeilles being at the junction of the two lines; the 1st Corps was on the hills west of Givonne and Daigny, facing east, the 7th Corps held the heights from Floing to the Garenne Wood, the 5th Corps were in reserve at Vieux Camp, north-east of Sedan. Margueritte's Cavalry was south-east of Illy, and Bonnemain's in a valley to the west of Cazal.

At 3 a.m. the battle opened, by an attack by the Bavarians on Bazeilles. At 6 a.m. McMahon was wounded, and left the field with all his staff, designating Ducrot as his successor. Ducrot, who knew nothing of the seriousness of the attack on Bazeilles, believing that the Germans were advancing from the east and south-east, ordered the 1st and part of the 12th Corps to retire northwards, leaving the troops in Bazeilles as rear-guard. Wimpffen now claimed and received command in virtue of his secret orders, and aware that the Germans were at Douchery, and had practically cut the line of retreat to Mezieres, determined to try to force a passage eastwards through the enemy. This attempt was defeated. Wimpffen now heard that the 12th Corps had been driven out of Bazeilles, and attempted to stem the rout with part of the 1st Corps, but the movement failed, as did a mass charge of cavalry against the German right centre. The French were soon afterwards forced back to Sedan and surrounded.

McMahon was throughout the operations in a difficult position. Urged on both by the Cabinet, by political considerations, and by unwillingness to abandon his comrades in Metz, he acted against his better judgment, and this fact may, unwittingly, have influenced his whole attitude. His immediate object seems to have been to slip away from an enemy of whose strength and positions he was uncertain, and made no effort to probe, and as a result he put his neck into the noose.

In blaming McMahon it must be remembered that the whole training of the French army had been of the value

of the positions and strength of the defensive, and that activity was regarded as rashness. Moreover, his hastily assembled troops and transport were in no way fitted to undertake the desperate venture on which he was launched.

A few of the principal lessons of the campaign, as considered from the French side, may be summarized as follows:—

The necessity for accord between policy and strategy, and the influence of politics on strategy is clearly demonstrated, as is the fact that adequate peace preparation is the foundation of success in war. The hesitations of the Emperor and his marshals show that any course is better than a policy of drift. The bold plan would, moreover, as the campaign was fought, have achieved greatest results.

Resolution is, therefore, a quality essential to command success as a general, especially since the weight of responsibility oppresses all but the greatest minds, and the attitude of the leader is reflected in that of the troops.

A commander, too, must be able to compel the co-operation of his subordinates, and must not allow himself to be unduly influenced by their representations.

Errors in strategical deployment are, it is seen, rarely repaired in the course of one campaign, and success is bought by concentration of effort, not by dissemination of force.

Though a bold plan vigorously executed is the basis, good information is the keystone of military success, but co-operation, and an efficient and educated staff, are also required.

The influence on military operations of the moral factors, of topography, and of weather, is most evident, as is the fact that hastily collected and ill-trained troops are incapable of prolonged effort.

Other matters for consideration are the use and abuse of fortresses; the misapplication of cavalry, one of whose principal functions seems to be to confirm reports gained from other sources; and the advantages, and disadvantages, of envelopment, of linear formations in strategy, and of divergent retreat.

V

German Operations

PRUSSIA'S success in the war of 1866, against Austria and the South German States had left her allied with the latter and mistress of North Germany, but anxious to federate the whole into a strong German Empire. The Southern States, however, showed no marked inclination to place themselves under the selfish protection of Prussia, so that the Prussian statesmen felt that federation could most easily be secured if threat of foreign invasion tended to draw, for the sake of mutual protection, the South closer to the North German States.

For these and other reasons, Prussia was, therefore, by no means averse to war, if reasonable excuse could be found, and a contest with France, now Prussia's most formidable rival, appeared to present the easiest solution to the problem. France, though not eager to pick a quarrel, was naturally alarmed by Prussia's increase of power, following on the success of 1866, and by her hardly concealed desire to bind the German States in a close federation. Such consummation would obviously be disadvantageous to France, for it would bring her, as neighbour, a powerful state, instead of a weak and loose federation of minor principalities, and would, therefore, at best, demand a considerable increase in French armaments.

France, consequently, was bound in self-interest to oppose, by every means in her power, Prussia's aggrandisement, and with such conditions friction between the two states was naturally not infrequent.

As early as 1867 France and Prussia came, as has been

rated into diplomatic conflict over Luxemburg, a state which Prussia claimed the right to garrison, France naturally objecting. This question was solved by proclaiming Luxemburg neutral, but, in the existing atmosphere of tension, a fresh cause of quarrel was soon forthcoming.

In July, 1870, the Spanish Ministry decided to elect a German Prince, Leopold of Hohenzollern, King of Spain. France at once protested, not wishing to be enveloped by German or pro-German states; the Prime Minister made the remaining speech, the situation became serious, and the prince resigned his candidature. Finally Bismark, who probably was aware of the Franco-Austrian intrigue, and desired to clinch matters before an alliance was completed, practically forced on the war by publishing a somewhat curt reply addressed to the Emperor, in answer to some French representations and requests that the King of Prussia would not again support the Hohenzollern candidate.

Assuming that the neutrality of Belgium, Luxemburg, and Switzerland would be respected, and that the South German States would join Prussia, the Franco-Prussian theatre of war extended from Basle for about ninety miles along the Rhine to Luxemburg, thence westwards for a hundred miles or so to Perl. (See Maps 1 and 2.) This area embraces, in German territory, the mountainous and wooded district of the Palatinate, lying west of the Rhine, and traversed by but few roads. East of the Rhine, and opposite Strasburg, is met the tangle of forested mountains, called the Black Forest, stretching as far as Carlsruhe, and north of the latter is a great plain bounded, near Mannheim, by another series of wooded hills known as the Oden Wald. On the French side the Rhine plain extends for thirty or forty miles westwards to the Vosges, a considerable range of wooded peaks, fifteen to twenty miles wide, and passable, by wheeled transport, only in comparatively few places. The Vosges sink as they run northwards, and about Saargemünd and Saarbrück become a medley of low, but densely wooded hills, through which the Saar winds its

way to join the Moselle. West of the Vosges lies the wooded valley of the latter river, and westward again flows the Meuse, which with the rugged and hilly district of the Argonnes, lying west of Verdun, is practically the eastern boundary of the great central plain of France.

The frontier dividing the two potential belligerents was concave for the Prussians and convex for the French, thus allotting each the well-known advantages and disadvantages of such formations.

Permanent points of passage over the Rhine were as follows:—

At Kehl, a bridge of boats, with permanent approach.

At Maxau, a bridge of boats, traversed by the railway leading from Carlsruhe to Landau.

At Germersheim, a bridge of boats, guarded by a double bridge head.

At Mannheim, a bridge of boats and a permanent railway bridge.

At Worms, a bridge of boats.

At Mayence (or Maintz), a bridge of boats and two railway bridges, protected by a fortress.

At Coblentz, a bridge of boats, and a permanent bridge guarded by a double bridge head.

At Bonn, a bridge of boats.

At Cologne, a bridge of boats, a permanent bridge, and a railway bridge.

At Dusseldorf, a bridge of boats, a permanent bridge, and a railway bridge.

At Hunigen, Lauterburg, and in several other localities there were ferries or flying bridges.

The principal roads leading from the Rhine into France were:— [See Maps 1 and 2.]

Those passing by Belfort, through the gap of Burgundy between the Vosges and Jura, and partially closed by this fortress.

By Colmar and St. Die, guarded by the fortress of Neu Brisach.

By Schimek, watched by Strasburg fortress.

From Strasburg to Saarbourg, on which stands the fort of Phalsbourg.

Via Hagenau to the Upper Saar, guarded by the fort of Petite Pierre.

Via Hagenau to Saarguemines, watched by Lichtenberg, or to Saarguemines via Neiderbronn, guarded by Bitsche.

Across the Palatinate, roads from Mannheim, Worms, Mayence, and Bingen, converged on Kaiserslautern, Kusel, Baumholder, and Birkenfeld, leading thence, over the hills, to Saarlouis, Saarbruck, and Saarguemines. Another series trended southwards to Hagenau and Lauterburg; and in the north of the Palatinate a road led up the Moselle to Thionville.

The Germans could use nine railways to concentrate on the frontier, viz.:—

Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, Coblentz.

Berlin, Cassel, Frankfort, Mannheim, Homburg.

Leipzig, Fulda, Mayence.

Leipzig, Kriensen, Paderborn, Biebrich.

Munster, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Call.

Leipzig, Wurzburg, Mayence.

Munich, Ulm, Bruchsal.

Nordlingen, Crailsheim, Meckesheim.

Wurzburg, Heidelburg.

Lines also led from Carlsruhe, Mannheim, Worms, and Bingerbruck, to Saarbruck and Saarlouis, and from the latter there was a railway up the Saar River to Treves.

The French had two lines of rail from Paris, to Chalons and Chaumont respectively. From the former, branches went to Mezieres, Verdun, Nancy, and Metz; from the latter, to Belfort. Lateral lines joined Belfort, Strasburg, Saarbruck; and Belfort, Metz, Mezieres. Mezieres was in connection with Northern, and Chaumont and Belfort with Southern France.

The advantages or drawbacks inherent in any form of

frontier are naturally contingent on possession of the initiative.

But the concave shape of the German frontier placed the German strategists in the dilemma of having either to divide their forces so as to protect both sides of the re-entrant; to take up a position at the apex, thus indirectly guarding both flanks; or to deploy on one side of the angle and so indirectly secure the other.

If the Germans deployed south of Lauterburg, they would be covered by the Rhine on one hand, and the Hardt Mountains might be trusted to delay the advance of the French. But passages over the Rhine in this stretch were scarce, and the paucity of crossing-places would hinder a German offensive. Besides, roads over the Vosges were few, and were blocked by fortresses. Deployment in the Palatinate would threaten all French troops south of the Lauter, and the Rhine would cause a French offensive into Baden to be slow, and would give time to the Germans to strike it in flank; or would enable them, by pressing into France, to draw back the French invaders. On the other hand, if the deployment took place west of the Hardt Mountains, the troops would have to assemble dangerously near the French frontier; if east, their first marches would be through these defiles, and probably also astride the mountains.

The direction of the railway lines was, however, favourable to a deployment in or behind the Palatinate.

In a detailed plan of operations prepared during the winter of 1868–9, Moltke, chief of the general staff, considered the possibility of a war against France and Austria combined, for in the latter country there was known to be a party hostile to Prussia, and ready to ally with France for Prussia's overthrow. Moltke decided that the offensive should be taken against France, the most formidable and well-prepared of the potential allies, and a defensive attitude adopted against Austria. He added that Austria could not be ready for six weeks, and that, as neither Austria nor

France could reasonably hope to wage, alone, successful war against North Germany, France should be attacked the moment Austria commenced warlike preparations.

At this period thirteen and a half corps of first line troops were available in North Germany for war, viz.: The Guard, in Berlin; the 1st, Prussian Corps; the 2nd, Pomeranian; the 3rd, Brandenburg; the 4th, Prussian Saxony; the 5th, Posen; the 6th, Silesian; the 7th, Westphalian; the 8th, Rhenish Prussian; and additions, since 1866, to the North German Confederation, the 9th, Elbe Duchies; the 10th, Hanoverian; the 11th, Hesse-Darmstadt-Cassel, etc.; the 12th, Saxon; and a division from the Grand Duchy of Hesse.

Of these Moltke proposed to employ ten against France; three against Austria, and to guard the coasts from French enterprises, viz. the 1st, 2nd, and 6th Corps, and the 17th Division of the 9th Corps, besides Landwehr, etc.

It was calculated that North Germany could put into the field, against France, at the commencement of war—i.e. on twentieth day of mobilization—330,000 men, and France only 250,000 men, to be increased later to 343,000. If the South German States sided with Prussia, her forces would be increased by 110,000, or, failing this, if the latter had time to bring up the three Home Defence Corps and the Landwehr, the numerical preponderance would be more than ever in her favour. In any case, Moltke wrote that Germany should try to take advantage of her initial numerical superiority on land, even if France used her naval strength to land troops on the Baltic and North Sea coasts. If the French detached men to the North Sea, or into South Germany, so much the better, for they would be weaker in the decisive battle the Germans should try to force. Besides, a German army deployed in the neighbourhood of Landau and Germersheim would indirectly cover South Germany, and if not prevent, at any rate make dangerous a French movement into South Germany.

In this last sentence is shown the strategist freed from

the political trammels which induced dispersion of force to safeguard territory in 1866.

In Moltke's opinion, an offensive by the French via Belgium was improbable, but if attempted, the Germans could advance on to the French line of communications, whilst the French were delayed by the Belgian and probably British armies, and by the Rhine and its fortresses. Nor, for similar political and military reasons, was France likely to violate the neutrality of Switzerland, in order by this route to join the Austrian armies.

Moltke went on to add that if the French wished to make best use of their railway system they would deploy in two groups separated by the Vosges, the larger in Lorraine, the smaller in Alsace.

He assumed that the French would, if given the initiative, cross the Rhine in Alsace and march to the Main river, thus turning the Rhine fortresses, and separating North from South Germany. After concluding a convention with the South Germans, they would use their territory as base from which to advance to the Elbe. The Germans, by marching from the Palatinate up the Rhine, could, however, soon check such movements, and in this eventuality the decisive battle might take place near Rastatt. Moreover the Germans, if deployed in the Palatinate, would occupy interior lines with reference to the two French groups, and, with German troops in the Palatinate, the Upper and Lower Rhine would be equally well protected, whilst an offensive into France would present no difficulties. The Palatinate area was, therefore, chosen as a suitable locality for strategical deployment. The only question now to be considered was whether the deployment should be behind the Rhine, in the Palatinate, or on the frontier, and Moltke believed that probably it would be possible to deploy on the border. If, however, the French, who had large garrisons in Eastern France, collecting 150,000 men, invaded eight days after declaration of war, the Germans could deploy behind the Rhine, which the French would not

reach until the fourteenth day, and by this time the Germans would have more than 150,000 men available to meet the enemy.

An alternative favoured by recent writers, which Moltke, however, does not seem to have thought necessary or desirable, was the advance of the 7th and 8th, or 8th and 11th Corps into the Palatinate, to cover, with the assistance of cavalry corps, the deployment of the remainder of the army.

Moltke next dealt with the higher organization of the Germans. In this connection he remarked that such large forces must be subdivided into several armies, and proposed a first army and right wing of the 7th and 8th Corps, grouped in the neighbourhood of Wittlich, strength about 60,000 men; a second army of the 3rd, 4th, 10th, and Guard Corps, in the centre, between Neunkirchen and Homburg, numbering about 130,000 men; a third army of the 5th and 11th Corps with the Bavarians, Wurtemburgers, and Badeners, if they would co-operate, to be placed near Landau and Rastatt, in all 130,000 men, or 60,000 without the Bavarians and other South German States; a reserve was to deploy near Mayence, of the 9th and 12th Corps, about 63,000 men.

Thus the 1st Army was to be about three, the 3rd two marches from the 2nd Army, and it will be seen that the greatest strength was to be at the point of greatest danger, but the 2nd Army west of the Hardt Mountains might be in some peril of defeat in detail.

Moltke, continuing, remarked that if the 3rd Army was obliged to move southwards to meet an offensive of a French force from Strasburg, the Reserve Corps would form the left wing of remainder, who would make a counter-invasion westwards.

If the French should succeed in collecting their whole strength against the 2nd Army, the latter was to fall back on to the Reserve, not, it may be remarked, an easy task, having regard to the topography of the Palatinate. Should the French move towards the Upper Rhine, the Germans

could meet them with the 2nd and 3rd Armies and Reserve, whilst the 1st Army operated against their line communication; a project, it may be noted, at variance with the principle of concentration of effort.

Moltke further proceeded to say that if the 2nd Army could maintain its forward position, its wings would be secured by the 1st and 3rd Armies, and it could be reinforced by the Reserve; the 3rd Army, too, marching first, could crush any French forces in Alsace, subsequently joining the 1st and 2nd Armies.

The plan outlined above, having been accepted, Moltke as early as May 6th, 1870, circulated to the General Staff a memorandum, in which he remarked that if war broke out France would be invaded in as close formation as possible, until the enemy was met and brought to battle. The formation would be a right wing, 1st Army, of two corps; a centre, 2nd Army, of four corps; a left, 3rd Army, of two corps; a Reserve, behind the centre, 4th Army, of two corps. The main object of the Germans would be to engage all four armies simultaneously in the first battle, which they would endeavour to fight as soon as possible. The general objective would be Paris, because, by marching in this direction, the enemy would inevitably be encountered; the armies would move south of Metz, only a corps of observation being detached against that fortress. By advancing, the Germans would oblige the enemy to conform to their movements. If no battle had taken place before the Moselle was reached, the armies would pause on the line Luneville —Pont-a-Mousson. Up to this point the 2nd Army would be in first, the 4th in second line, the other two protecting the flanks. To ensure concentration for battle, the advance would be covered by a large force of cavalry, supported by an infantry division, with a second division as its support. The leading infantry division could assist the cavalry with weak detachments of infantry, sent forward in carriages or country carts, but the bulk of division would march concentrated.

The army must always concentrate to the front, and lateral communication must be maintained.

Then followed detailed instructions as to marches and march discipline.

With regard to Moltke's plans and projects, it may be remarked that the arrangement of his troops with a central reserve would be likely to defeat his object of engaging the four armies simultaneously, for room for the deployment of the fourth might be lacking. The latter might, therefore, preferably have been placed level with the front line. The presence of the Hardt Mountains rendering the area available, in the Palatinate, somewhat cramped for deployment, the frontage might have been extended to Rastatt, passage for troops, here, being opened by the southward march of the rest of the 3rd Army. It is true that under this arrangement the bulk of the force would have been south of the Hardt Mountains, but it seems probable that eventual deployment into line west of the Saar could have been more quickly and expeditiously attained, than by massing troops behind and marching them through the Hardt Mountains. Moreover, the danger of defeat in detail, before deployment, would not have been greater in the linear than in the formation in depth, and the presence of the Hardt Mountains necessitated either a movement astride the obstacle, or through it on a narrow frontage.

In accordance with Moltke's memorandum, the German forces in 1870 were divided into three armies and a reserve. There were, besides, three Home Defence Corps, which mobilized, but at first had no transport.

The 1st Army consisted of the 7th and 8th Corps, and 3rd Cavalry Division; the 2nd Army of the Guard, 3rd, 4th, and 10th Corps, and 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions; the 3rd Army of the 5th and 11th Corps, 1st and 2nd Bavarian Corps, the Wurtemburg Division, the Baden Division, and the 4th Cavalry Division, for the South Germans at once threw in their lot with their kinsmen.

The Reserve included the 9th and 12th Corps. The mobilized troops, earmarked for Home Defence and without transport, comprised the 1st, 2nd, 6th Corps, and the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions.

Coast Defence was confided to the 17th Division, and to the Landwehr Divisions of the Guard, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Corps.

July 16th. On July 16th mobilization was ordered to commence on the next day, and on 19th King William assumed command of the armies. On 19th the North German Reichstag voted a credit of £18,000,000, whilst the South German States sent contributions amounting to about £3,500,000.

The armies were ordered to concentrate, as follows, by August 3rd:—1st Army, as right wing, under General Von Steinmetz, near Wittlich, strength 60,000; the 2nd Army, under Prince Frederick Charles, 130,000 men, at or near Neunkirchen and Homburg; the 3rd Army, left wing, under the Crown Prince Frederick, 130,000 strong, near Landau and Rastatt; Reserve, 63,000 men, near Mayence. The small peace garrisons, nine battalions and eight squadrons, belonging in part to the 1st, in part to the 2nd Army, watched the Saar from Conz to Saarguemines. Beyond the latter place the frontier was guarded by troops from the 3rd Army.

On August 3rd the three armies were to be ready to move, the 1st Army to the line Saarlouis—Merzig, a rugged district easily defended. The right of this army would rest on Luxemburg, and its left was to be supported by the 2nd Army. The latter was to move to the line Wolklingen, Saarbruck, and towards Saarguemines. If attacked by superior numbers it was to fall back on the Reserve and accept battle, reinforced by part of the 3rd Army standing near Mannheim, whilst the 1st Army operated against the French left. If the 2nd Army was able to invade France, the 1st Army would secure its right, and the 3rd Army attack the French near Strasburg.

The 3rd Army was to move to line Landau—Carlsruhe on both banks of the Rhine. If, however, a large force of French assembled at Strasburg, the 3rd Army was to remain east of the Rhine, where it would be reinforced by the Reserve from Mayence. The two would then operate against the left of any French invading from Strasburg, whilst the 1st and 2nd Armies marched into France. If the French invaded the Palatinate with any troops they could scrape together, they were to be met on the Rhine.

Whether an answer to French invasion of South Germany, at once bolder and more effective, would not have been counter-invasion of France with the four armies, is for consideration. Political exigencies, however, probably influenced Moltke's proposals.

The Germans were somewhat apprehensive that a raid into the Palatinate might be attempted to upset their mobilization, and to avoid this disaster, on the news, on July 23rd, of the French advance to the frontier, Moltke ordered the 2nd Army to detrain at Mayence and Mannheim, but made no other alterations in their plans.

On 23rd the railway movements began. [For details as to the positions of the troops, see Appendix II.]

On July 24th the German intelligence department believed the French to be standing, the 2nd Corps at St. Avold, the 4th, 3rd, and Guard, respectively at Thionville, Metz, and Nancy; the 5th Corps between Saarguemines and Bitche; the 1st Corps at Strasburg; the 6th Corps at Chalons, and two divisions at Paris. The 7th Corps was believed to be at or concentrating at Belfort. It was understood, that on this date, the first five divisions and Guard numbered 124,000, but would be increased shortly to 163,000. The total force was estimated at 172,000 men, which, after July 29th, would be reinforced to 228,000. July 24th.

The proximity of the French to the frontier was thought to possibly portend an attempt to embarrass the German deployment, consequently, as has been stated, the 2nd Army was ordered to detrain on the Rhine and march from

the river, and the Crown Prince's troops to go into close cantonments.

On 26th the Germans found out that two divisions of McMahon's Corps were at Strasburg, and two near Brumath; also that troops had arrived at Weissemburg.

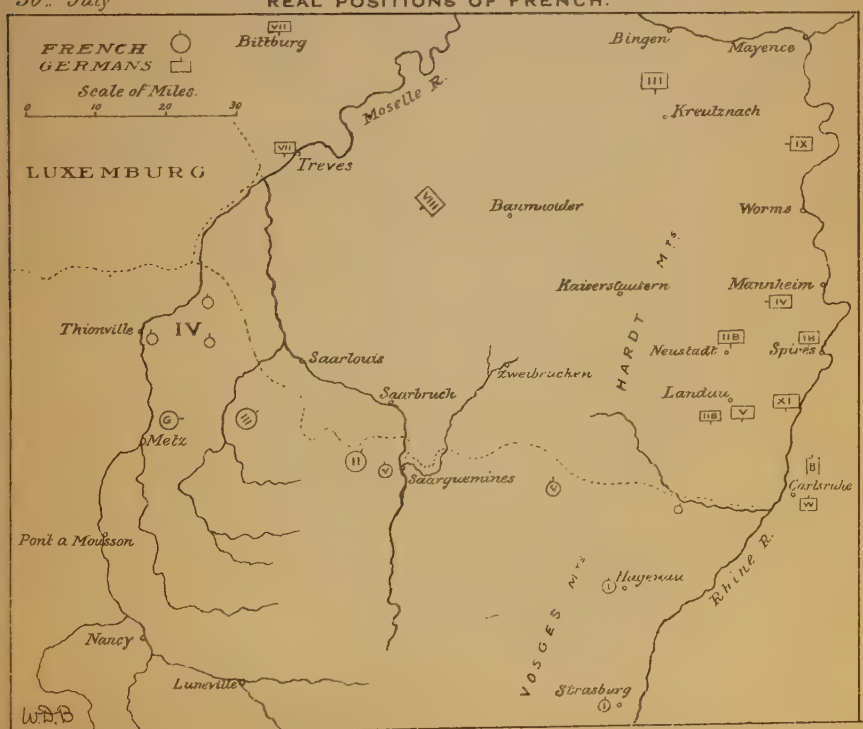
July 29th. A telegram was sent, on July 29th, to the 1st Army, to advance to the line Wadern—Losheim, and to the 2nd Army to march the 3rd and 4th Corps to the line Alsenz—Gollheim—Grunstadt. This forward movement seemed quite secure in view of the passivity of the French. It

July 30th. was only on July 30th that the commanders of the three armies arrived at the front. The King and Moltke did not reach Mayence until August 2nd. If the French had attacked, on 30th, they would therefore have been met merely by detachments, who would have lacked a guiding hand.

According to the German information on 30th, the French seemed to be grouped on the line Forbach—Bitche. Believing the detachment at Saarbruck to be in danger, General Von Goeben, to whose 8th Corps the troops on this portion of the frontier belonged, telegraphed to Headquarters for instructions, reinforced the detachment by two battalions, and sent a supporting force to Lehbach. Moltke replied that the infantry might retire, but that the cavalry must remain in touch. The whole detachment, however, kept its positions. Moltke at the same time telegraphed to the commander of the 2nd Army to form two cavalry divisions, to be numbered the 5th and 6th, from the cavalry of the army, and to push them to the frontier between Saarbruck and Bitche, which, however, they did not reach until August 4th.

Later on 30th, possibly as an offset to the French concentration towards Forbach, the Crown Prince was requested to march southwards, and to attack the enemy as soon as the Baden and Wurtemburg divisions came up. But the Crown Prince replied that he would not be able to advance before August 3rd. A forward movement by the 3rd Army

30th July REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.



on 30th, might have resulted in a battle, in the Vosges, with the 1st, 5th, and possibly Guard Corps, who if they had fought as well as did McMahon's men at Woerth, would have given the Germans some trouble. [See Map 14.]

The German cavalry was not well handled at this period. Though a few patrols were pushed forward, the divisions were, as a rule, kept behind the infantry, and apparently Moltke was unwilling to launch his cavalry without infantry support.

July 31st. On 31st, the German Headquarters had news of considerable movements of troops in front of Saarbruck; strong columns were marching on Forbach, the French troops at Sierck were fewer, and battalions had been sent westwards from Bitche. Moltke, thinking that this stir might portend a French offensive into the Palatinate, directed the German generals to collect their forces, those of the 1st Army on the line Wadern—Losheim; the 2nd Army to mass, near Alzey, the 3rd, 4th, and 9th Corps, and behind these the Guard, 10th and 12th Corps; meanwhile, Prince Frederick Charles was to select a defensive position near Goelheim and Kircheim.

At the same time, the general officer commanding the 11th Corps, at Landau and Germersheim, was given orders as to dispositions to meet a French offensive, from Strasburg up either bank of the Rhine.

At this juncture Moltke appears to have intended the 1st Army to reach the line Saarlouis—Rehlingen, by August 3rd, though the leading troops of the 2nd Army were not timed to arrive on the Saar before 8th. Had this plan been adopted, and had Steinmetz been attacked by the French, it is possible that his impatient temper might have induced him to accept battle with disastrous results.

August 1st. The information at the disposal of the German Headquarters on August 1st, seemed to point to the acceptance, by the French, of battle behind the Saar. It was known that the camp at Sierck had been evacuated, and that the French had moved from this place towards Saarlouis. Op-

posite Saarbruck the enemy was inactive, but troops were advancing northwards from Strasburg, and from Hunigen to Strasburg. Intrenchments were being thrown up at Ober Steinbach, Lembach, and Weissemburg.

Nevertheless, probably as a precautionary measure, the 1st Army continued its concentration, the 3rd Cavalry Division, less the troops on the frontier, being sent to the south of Losheim, and the 7th Cavalry Brigade, with an infantry support, to Conz and Saarburg. The 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions also moved forward a little, the 5th being on either flank of the 6th.

On the night of July 31st–1st August, the commander of the 2nd Army was notified, that from 2nd, the troops arriving from Germany might detrain at Kaiserlautern and Birkenfeld. The 3rd Corps was to reach Baumholder on August 3rd, and the 9th Corps was to proceed to the line Alsenz—Durkheim, so as to leave room for the 6th and 1st Corps to come up; the 4th Corps was to move to Kaiserslautern, to act as covering body.

The 3rd Army was meanwhile continuing its concentration.

August 2nd. On August 2nd, the French drove the German detachments at Saarbruck across the Saar. Their leader, General Gneisenau, reassembled his troops a few miles north of Saarbruck, but though he here received news that the enemy had not even occupied the bridges over the Saar, he decided, at 6 p.m., to retire further, thereby losing touch with the French. Contact was, however, re-established next day, by four officers' patrols, sent out by General Barnekow, commanding the 16th Division.

Royal Headquarters, which had now reached Mayence, were ignorant, until noon on August 3rd, of the events of Saarbruck, though General Von Goeben of the 8th Corps, and the commander of the 1st Army, both heard the news on the evening of 2nd.

Goeben, with Steinmetz's approval, ordered Barnekow to push, on August 3rd, advanced troops to Dudweiler, Saar-

bruck, and Wolklingen, and to move the 16th Division southwards; at the same time the 7th Corps was, contrary to Moltke's orders, to advance to Merzig, Brodorf, and neighbourhood. These movements brought the 1st Army somewhat close to the French, who were believed to be about to cross Saar, whilst the 2nd Army was still too far away to support the 1st should the latter be attacked.

In criticizing Steinmetz, it is well to remember that it is more than doubtful whether he understood that his rôle was to fall on the left of the French as they engaged the 2nd Army, and no clear instructions to this effect appear to have been issued. At any rate, Steinmetz's idea seems to have been to cover the deployment of the 2nd Army by drawing on himself the French. This course might have been sound, so long as the 1st Army was in position to avoid decisive action.

On 2nd, before the news of Saarbruck had reached the Royal Headquarters, orders were sent to the 2nd Army, that if the French crossed the Saar, the 3rd Corps was to stand fast, and the 4th not to move beyond Kaiserslautern. As a matter of fact, Prince Frederick Charles had already decided, in event of a French offensive, to concentrate behind the Hardt Mountains. If the enemy remained passive, the 3rd Corps, wrote Moltke, could move to Baumholder on August 3rd, and the 4th Corps to Landstuhl, but not beyond these places until the remainder of the army had closed to half a day's march.

These deliberate movements show how slowly an army traverses even a moderately difficult range of hills.

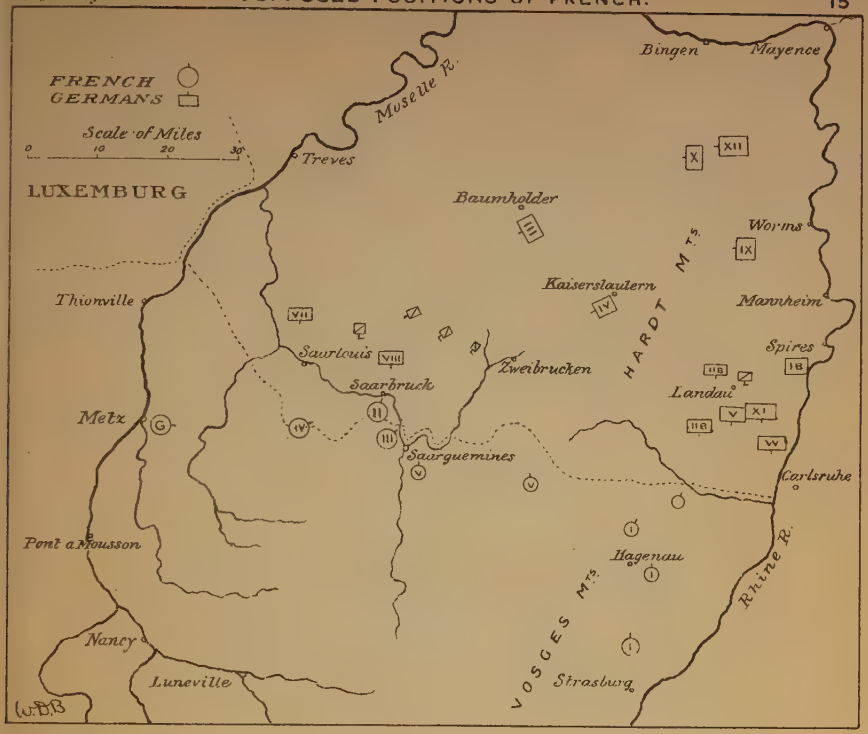
The 3rd Army, on August 2nd, closed up with a view to its advance across the frontier on the arrival of its trains. In the evening, Colonel Von Verdy du Vernois arrived from Royal Headquarters, to say that Moltke thought the forward movement should not be further postponed. The Crown Prince, therefore, decided to cross the frontier on 4th, whether the trains had come up or not.

On August 3rd, Royal Headquarters seem to have August 3rd.

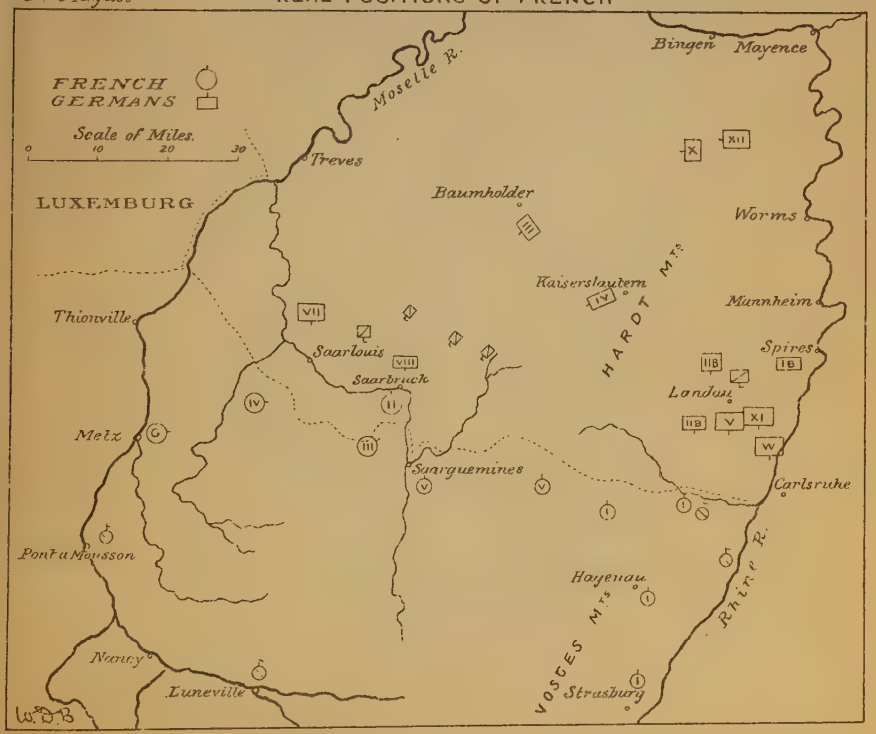
possessed full knowledge of the general French dispositions, and the Crown Prince even remarked to Verdy du Vernois that it was a pity that only McMahon's Corps would oppose the 3rd Army. As to particulars of the enemy, the situation of the 1st French Corps, in default of bold cavalry reconnaissance, remained somewhat obscure. General Von Rheinbaden, however, with the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions, obtained contact with the main French army, reporting, in the evening, that there were no signs of any intention to advance, that the infantry was scattered along the whole frontier, that at St. Arnaul were 15,000 men, and that a column of all arms had crossed the frontier to Bubenheim on 2nd, but had retired in the evening. Steinmetz only on August 3rd completed the constitution of the 3rd Cavalry Division, but the troops of the 1st Army, already on the frontier, reported that Sierck and Bouzonville seemed clear of French, and that larger numbers had appeared at Saarbruck. [See Map 15.]

From this information Moltke concluded that the French did not intend an offensive, but ordered Steinmetz to collect his army, on 4th, about Tholey, ready to act against the French left if they advanced, whilst the 2nd Army took up a position near Kaiserslautern, and the 3rd moved southwards. In regard to these arrangements it may be remarked that Tholey was rather near the line of march of the 2nd Army, whose operations might have been restricted by the proximity of Steinmetz's troops.

Since the 1st Army was in position on its right, and the 3rd would march next day to Weissemburg, it appeared as if the passage of the 2nd Army through the Hardt Mountains was sufficiently secured, for the movement of the 3rd Army was calculated, if not to turn the French position on the Saar, at least to attract the attention of the French towards Alsace, and away from the 2nd Army. And Moltke's plan was to hold back the 1st and 2nd Armies until the progress of the 3rd had cleared their front, or until the three could combine in a great enveloping movement.



3rd August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH



Under instructions from Moltke, Prince Frederick Charles therefore ordered the advance of his army to continue as before arranged, the 4th Corps to Landstuhl, with advanced guard beyond this place; the 3rd Corps to Baumholder, with one division moved forward as support to the cavalry. The remaining corps made an ordinary day's march.

The 3rd Army had, as has been mentioned, been directed to cross the Lauter and attack the enemy, and the Crown Prince issued orders to this effect, retaining, however, his cavalry behind the infantry.

Bothmer's Bavarian Division and portions of the 5th and 11th Corps surprised and routed Douay's 2nd Division of the 1st French Corps, on August 4th, at Weissemburg. Douay's men finally withdrew under cover of Septeuil's Cavalry Brigade, and of part of the 1st French Division. The Germans, making little or no attempt at pursuit, lost touch with the defeated French, but found Soultz in the enemy's possession. August 4th.

The Crown Prince, therefore, issued orders for careful reconnaissance to be made on 5th, whilst the army moved forward, closing on its left.

On this day Moltke sent to army commanders a sketch, showing, with considerable accuracy, the estimated positions of the French troops. McMahon's 1st Corps was placed at Hagenau, a detachment, or perhaps a brigade of the 7th Corps, was at Strasburg. At Bitche was Failly's Corps, and the two would, it was thought, concentrate about Woerth. At Saarguemines was believed to be a brigade, or a division of the 2nd Corps, the remainder being at or near Forbach. The 3rd Corps was placed near Boulay, towards which the Guard was understood to be advancing from Metz; the 4th Corps was at Thionville and Bouzonville. Moltke remarked that the French appeared to be determined to accept battle in a strong position behind the Saar. [See Map 6.]

During 4th Moltke approved of Steinmetz's dispositions of 3rd, but ordered the 1st Army to halt and await instruc-

tions. Steinmetz, chafing at delay, telegraphed a protest to Moltke, remarking that he did not understand the situation, to which Moltke merely answered that written instructions were being sent. Later in the day, Steinmetz received a telegram from Prince Frederick Charles, suggesting that since the left of the 1st Army was across the line of march of the 2nd Army, the former should close on its right. Steinmetz replied that he had occupied his position under instructions from the King, and appealed to the latter, but did not receive an answer until next day.

The information at the disposal of 2nd Army tending to show that a French offensive was improbable, Prince Frederick Charles issued directions for the passage of the Hardt Mountains.

The army was to advance to the Lauter in two columns—one via St. Wendel and Neunkirchen, the other from Kaiserslautern to Homburg, through a defile twenty-four miles long. On the latter road would, therefore, be the 4th, 10th, 12th, and Guard Corps, or 106 battalions, 76 squadrons, 60 batteries. Even if second line transport was left behind, the danger of such disposition is obvious. Possibly, then, the 1st Army, reinforced by the cavalry division of the 2nd Army, might have been used to directly secure the deployment of the latter, and its passage through the defiles of the Hardt Mountains, which might have enabled the 2nd Army to move on a wider frontage. At the same time it is to be remembered that such dispositions would not have been without risk, for the two corps of the 1st Army would have been exposed to attack by four French corps, and perhaps, as already suggested, the Germans would, on the whole, have been better advised to have deployed on a wider frontage, a portion of the 3rd Army crossing the Rhine south of the Lauter.

August 5th. Early on August 5th, the 4th German Cavalry Division was sent towards Hagenau and Woerth, to obtain information of the French, but only succeeded in discovering that the Froeschwiller heights were held in considerable force.

The 2nd Bavarian Corps moved to Leubach, with outposts in touch with those of the 5th Corps. The latter bivouacked near Preuschdorf, with advanced troops to the Sauer. The 11th Corps advanced to the south of Soultz.

Werder's Corps [see Appendix II] moved to Ambach, and the 1st Bavarian Corps to Ingolsheim, though much delayed by both 5th and 11th Corps, who also hampered one another's march.

As a result of the day's information, the Crown Prince believed a large body of the French to be behind the Sauer, but was not aware how many of the enemy were about Hagenau. Thinking that he had, perhaps, to do with the 1st, 5th, and part, at any rate, of the 7th French Corps, he wished to secure his position, and to await, before giving battle, the arrival of the 6th German Corps, now posted to his army, and reported at Landau.

His orders for August 6th therefore directed a change of front, pivoting on Soultz, which would bring Werder's Corps, facing Hagenau, with the 11th Corps, ready to support Werder. The 2nd Bavarian and 5th German Corps were to stand fast, the 1st Bavarian was to advance to Lobsann and Lampertsloch, and the cavalry was to remain in position. No attempt was to be made to clear up the situation by active employment of cavalry, and no information was given to the troops, but later, the 2nd Bavarian Corps was told that if firing was heard at Woerth it was to attack. Since some units of the 5th Corps, and French, were in actual contact on the Sauer, this eventually was almost bound to occur, yet the order to the Bavarians was not repeated to the other corps.

The information possessed by General Steinmetz on 5th, was, generally speaking, that the French were leaving the Upper Sauer, and moving southwards. In accordance with instructions received from Moltke, that the road St. Wendel—Ottweiler—Neunkirchen, was to be cleared for the 2nd Army, also to make room for the 1st Cavalry Division and 1st Corps, now arriving to join his force, Steinmetz gave orders

for the 7th and 8th Corps, and 3rd Cavalry Division, to proceed, on 6th, in a south-westerly direction, thus bringing them nearer the Saar and the enemy, in direct opposition to Von Moltke's instructions of 4th. [See Map 16.]

August 6th. Steinmetz informed Headquarters of his intentions, and received from them, at 2.30 a.m. on 6th, a telegram stating that the 2nd Army could not be clear of the defiles of the Hardt Mountains before 7th, and that, therefore, the 1st Army, rather than move south-west, was not to completely clear the St. Wendel road. It might take up positions, on 7th, so as to be ready to pass the Saar on 9th, between Saarlouis and Wolklingen, and attack the left flank of the French, whilst the 2nd Army engaged their front.

Steinmetz, however, disregarded this order, possibly because of a report that the French were retiring, and consequently brought about the battle of Spicheren, for which the Germans were unprepared. But fortunately the French were less ready.

The 2nd Army advanced to the positions given in Appendix II, but the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions remained stationary, though the former reported fewer French at Saarbruck, and movements by road and rail towards St. Avold; and the latter, that much traffic was passing on Saarguemines—Bitche railway, whilst St. Arnaul had been abandoned by French.

At noon on 6th, Prince Frederick Charles was informed that the 2nd Corps was placed under his orders, and would detrain at Neunkirchen—Homburg, between 8th and 11th; also that the 2nd Army, unless the 3rd Army required assistance, was to march to the Saar, on 9th, supported, on its right, by the 1st Army; August 8th was to be a day of rest.

The battle of Spicheren, or Forbach, which took place on 6th, was fought, as has been shown, contrary to the wishes of Royal Headquarters, between the heads of the columns of the 1st Army, assisted by the 5th Division 2nd Army, which, in engaging the 2nd French Corps, were as nearly as possible beaten in detail. Had the French army been under

5th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.

the direction of a great leader, the Germans would certainly have suffered a disaster on account of Steinmetz's temerity, who practically thrust his head into the middle of the French forces.

Spicheren, which is said to have upset Moltke's plan to envelop the French, and to have been in this sense a strategical mistake, was possibly due to the secretiveness of Royal Headquarters, who did not take army commanders completely into their confidence.

It is, of course, by no means certain that the French would have waited to be enveloped, but the slowness of the German movements would have encouraged the French to remain near the frontier. On the other hand, Moltke might himself have brought about a battle on 7th, for on the evening of the battle of Spicheren, of which he had heard nothing, he sent Steinmetz, from Mayence, the following telegram: "The enemy seems to be retiring from the Saar. His Majesty has no objection to your crossing the frontier, but you must pass the Saar north of Saarbruck, leaving the Saarbruck—St. Avold road to the 2nd Army."

Steinmetz's orders to his army for the movements of August 7th, which were not carried out owing to the battle of Spicheren, had been for the 7th Corps to march to Guichenbach, advanced guard to Wolklingen and Saarbruck, the 8th Corps to near Dudweiler, the 3rd Cavalry Division to Labach, five miles south of Lehbach, covering the right of the army. The troops were informed that the 3rd Corps of the 2nd Army would reach Bildstock, the railway line being the boundary between the 7th and 3rd Corps as far as Landsweiler. Thus the prolongation of the dividing line between the two armies was to have run through the centre of the French forces—hardly a wise arrangement.

There was no pursuit after Spicheren, the Germans not being in condition, owing to admixture of units, to follow the French, and even doubtful whether they had gained a victory, for on the day following the battle Steinmetz expected to be attacked.

On 6th the battle of Woerth, or Froeschwiller, also took place between the Crown Prince and McMahon, being brought on by the former's order to the 2nd Bavarian Corps to attack if firing was heard near Woerth.

As was almost inevitable, with the two armies in such close contact, an outpost skirmish occurred at about 7.30 a.m. between some patrols of the 5th German Corps and the French; a German battery thereupon fired a few rounds, which were heard by the Bavarians, with the result that the latter attacked.

After hard fighting the Germans succeeded in enveloping the French, who retired in disorder on Niederbronn and Reichshoffen, followed, but hardly pursued, by the Wurtemburg Division, by a detachment of the 2nd Bavarian Corps, and by the 4th Cavalry Division as far only as Bouxwiller. Contact was lost that night with the French, and was not regained for weeks. The major portion of the Germans halted on the battlefield. [See Map 7.]

VI

IN spite of the victories of Woerth and Spicheren, owing to absence of pursuit and to loss of contact by the German cavalry, Moltke was uncertain both of the direction in which the French had retired, and as to the position of their main forces. Nor does he appear to have been willing to take definite measures until the situation had been cleared up. Whilst the cavalry was reconnoitring, he wrote to Blumenthal, Chief of the Staff to the Crown Prince: "So far as I can judge, the 1st and 2nd Armies must move southwards to get contact with your army, but I must find out the position of enemy's main body, which is probably near the Saar." August 7th.

Later he telegraphed to Steinmetz, that the 7th and 8th Corps were, on August 8th, to remain near Saarbruck and Wolklingen, if attacked were to occupy the Spicheren heights, and that no advance would be made until the cavalry had ascertained the enemy's attitude. To Blumenthal Moltke also telegraphed that he thought the French would be well advised to attack the 2nd Army before it could close up, an operation postponed by the Spicheren fight.

Unfortunately the German cavalry did not quite answer Von Moltke's expectations, and the horsemen only succeeded in locating the French centre about St. Avold, without discovering much of the movements of the enemy's flanks, though Saarguemines was found evacuated. Steinmetz, however, was partly to blame for their failure, for he ordered the 6th Cavalry Division not to harass the enemy, on the ground that the 1st Army could not advance on 7th, and was in no condition to accept battle. The 1st

Army therefore made no movement of importance on 7th, but closed up and reformed its cadres.

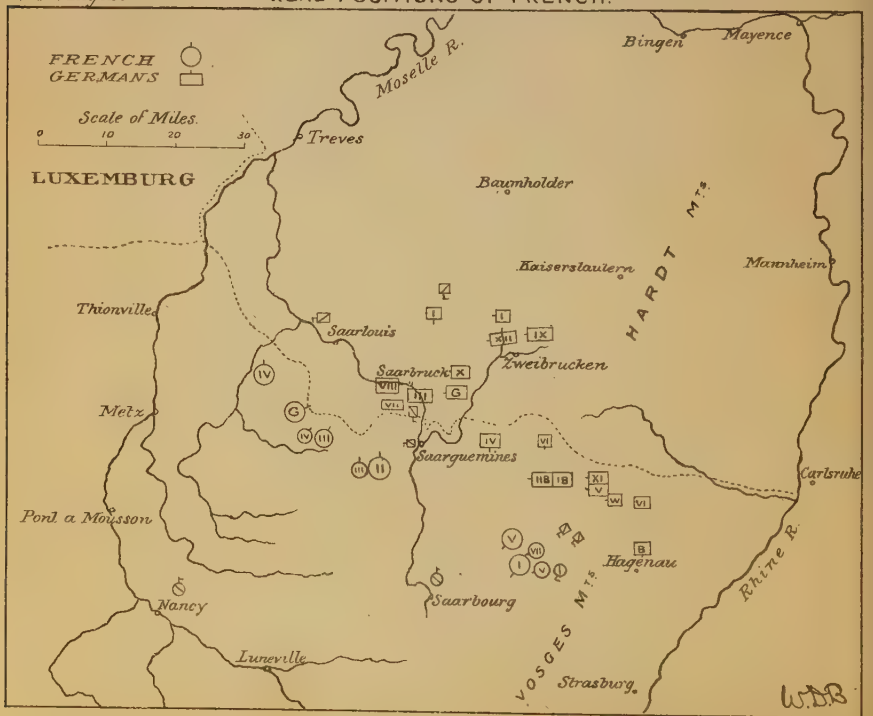
The 2nd Army also spent the day in closing up, but Moltke, hearing that McMahon had retired on Bitche, thought that he might fall on the left wing of the 2nd Army in his retreat towards Metz, and ordered Prince Frederick Charles to make preparations to meet an offensive from this quarter. The latter, consequently, directed the 4th Corps to proceed to Wolmunster, with an advanced guard on Rohrbach, and attached to it Bredow's Brigade of the 5th Cavalry Division; in addition, the Guard Cavalry and 2nd Guard Division were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to support the 4th Corps, and 1st Corps was also moved in a south-westerly direction.

The 3rd Army remained, for the most part, in its positions of the evening of 6th. Of the 6th Corps, the 12th Division, which had, on 6th, moved from Landau towards Bitche, partly to demonstrate against this place, partly to secure connection with the 2nd Army, was ordered to Bitche, to discover the line of retreat of McMahon's troops, and found that such of the enemy as had passed this place had moved southwards.

The cavalry of the 3rd Army reconnoitred towards Bitche and Saverne, and reported that the bulk of the French had retired on Bitche, but that a considerable column seemed to have taken the Saverne road.

On receipt of this news, the Crown Prince, concluding that after the success of Spicheren his army would no longer, as had at first been intended, be required to move on Saarguemines to envelop the right of the French, decided to at once push across the hilly region lying between Woerth and Nancy. Instructions were therefore issued for his troops to pass the hills in five columns, the cavalry division being directed to follow the 11th Corps. A halt was to be made, on 12th, on the line Saar Union—Saarbourg, that is in position overlapping the left of the 2nd Army. The order contained no reference to the enemy,

7th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.



or indication as to the functions of the army, except that the columns were to communicate with and support one another, and to attack the French whenever encountered.

That Moltke was somewhat unnerved by the overthrow of his plans, seems probable from the hesitation displayed by him after the success of Spicheren.

A great commander should not, once his troops are launched, wait for information of the enemy, thus risking loss of initiative, but should pursue his aim steadfastly, and force the opponent to conform to his movements.

Instead, then, of waiting for news, Moltke, now that more than one-third of the enemy had been beaten, might have argued that the most probable course for the French, was rapid retirement to concentrate and reorganize behind the Moselle. In order to prevent or at least hinder such plan, he might, on 7th, have ordered the 3rd, 4th, 7th, and 8th Corps, with the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 6th Cavalry Divisions, to march on St. Avold and attack the French, wherever found. At the same time the 3rd Army, after detaching to contain McMahon and Failly, might have moved as quickly as possible north-westwards, to envelop, from the south, the enemy's troops still east of Metz, and the remainder of the 2nd Army might have attempted a similar operation from the north. [See Map 17.]

August 8th.

On August 8th, the 1st and 3rd German Cavalry Divisions remained immobile. The 6th Cavalry Division found St. Avold occupied, but in process of evacuation by troops retiring on Longeville, that there was a large camp at Gross Tenquin, but that Puttelange and Capelle were clear of the enemy. The divisional cavalry of the 10th Corps met with French cavalry and infantry near Haut Homburg, and the 5th Cavalry Division encountered, at Lemberg, part of the 2nd Bavarian Corps foraging, and found French withdrawing from Puttelange.

As a result, Moltke might infer that in front of him were large bodies of the enemy, perhaps the mass of the army, but that the French were retreating westwards. He had

heard nothing from his cavalry as to the French dispositions north of St. Avold, but possessed news, from spies, of the withdrawal of the 2nd French Corps from Puttelange, that the 3rd was at St. Avold, the 4th marching south-west of Boucheporn on Metz, the 5th retiring southwards from Saarguemines, and this information must have made his mind easy as to an offensive by the French from a southerly direction.

On 8th, Prince Frederick Charles, finding that the movement towards Rohrbach had unduly extended the frontage of the 2nd Army, took the somewhat extraordinary step, to mitigate this disadvantage, of ordering the cavalry divisions to be attached, respectively, the 6th to the 3rd Corps, and the 5th to the 4th and 10th Corps, though, in case of battle, the Prince reserved to himself the right to withdraw the cavalry. The remaining troops of the 2nd Army were disposed as stated in Appendix II.

The 1st Army made a few movements, but, in accordance with Moltke's instructions, maintained an expectant attitude.

The 3rd Army began its march across the Vosges, the 12th Division turning Bitche fortress by a night march; but the Baden Division moved to Brumath, where it remained watching Strasburg.

August 9th. On 9th, Moltke's Intelligence Department placed the French 4th Corps north-east of Metz, the 3rd half-way between Metz and St. Avold, the 2nd north-east of Marhange and retiring on Metz, the 5th moving from Bourg Altroff on Marhange or Luneville. The German cavalry, without any brilliant reconnaissance, more or less confirmed this information, patrols of the 3rd Division reporting a large camp at Marhange, whilst the 6th Division brought news that Bazaine's 3rd Corps was, in the evening, near Courcelles Chaussy, whence it had marched from Faulquemont, where the Emperor and Bazaine had conferred on 8th. The 5th Cavalry Division accomplished little, though a patrol cut the Strasburg—Paris railway at Phalsbourg.

On the whole, Moltke inclined to believe that the bulk of the French were withdrawing either behind the Moselle or Seille, as, no doubt, they should have done, and on this supposition, issued, on 9th, orders for a general advance, which would bring the three armies on to the line Metz—Nancy, where they could act according to circumstances.

To the 3rd Army was allotted the Saar Union—Dieuze road and the routes to the south of it; to the 2nd Army the St. Avold—Nomeny road and those southwards; and to the 1st, the road Saarlouis—Boulay—Les Etangs and routes to the southward. The 1st and 2nd Armies were to halt on 10th, or to move troops into positions on their roads, and were consequently to make short marches, as the 3rd Army could not reach the Saar till 12th; but cavalry and advanced guards were to be pushed well to the front.

Thus the westward march of the Germans was not really to commence until 11th or 12th, when the 3rd Army would come into line. That is, the French would be given a clear five days in which to recover from the defeats of Spicheren and Woerth. The German armies would be moving on a frontage of sixty-five miles, the left through broken country, without good lateral communication, the right in advance of the remainder and almost straight in the direction of the main French army, whilst the bulk of the 2nd Army could hardly arrive on a field of battle to assist the 1st Army in one long day's march.

Perhaps the object of Von Moltke's dispositions was to insure the passage of the Moselle for his force, if possible containing the French with his right wing, so as to give time to his left to wheel up and achieve their envelopment. The 1st Army was probably sufficiently strong to resist, successfully, any French attack, and should such be attempted the retirement of the enemy across the Moselle would be delayed, which would be advantageous for the Germans. But it would have been better had the German advance been in echelon from the left rather than from the right, and though to attain such formation would have in-

volved greater delay in the start of the 1st and 2nd Armies, a day or two longer would not, at this juncture, have been any disadvantage, and might even have encouraged the French to stand and fight east of Metz. On the other hand, it is possible that the pushing forward of the 3rd Army would have alarmed the enemy, and caused him to fall back at once.

If Moltke moved in echelon from the right merely because of his conclusion that the French had withdrawn, he was clearly wrong, for until the enemy has been definitely located an army should always march in such formation as to be able to give battle to the best advantage, and not, as in this case, risk defeat in detail.

On 9th the 1st Army was still resting, whilst the 2nd continued to close up, a lesson in the slowness of movement through a defile. Even the 4th Corps and Guard did not advance, in spite of the fact that the general direction of McMahon's retreat had now been ascertained.

The 3rd Army continued its south-westerly movement, in course of which part of the Wurtemburg Division captured, after a sharp skirmish, the little fort of Lichtenberg.

August 10th. On August 10th, the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions accomplished nothing, for they moved, behind the 1st Corps, into position for the next day's march, but a patrol of the advanced guard of the 8th Corps found the French in force west of Fouligny, a village north of Faulquemont. The cavalry of the 2nd Army was for the most part employed on outpost rather than on reconnaissance duty, though the 3rd French Corps was discovered, with other troops, near the villages of Mont and Silly-sur-Nied, and the 5th Cavalry Division found no enemy at Phalsbourg, Lixheim, or Saarbourg. Special officers' patrols also discovered that the 2nd French Corps was retiring on Metz, that there were large French camps at Pange and Mont, that strong columns were advancing from Metz towards Courcelles Chaussy, that bodies of French were to the west of the Nied, that reinforcements had reached Metz from Nancy, and that

Chateau Salins was not occupied by the enemy. Some French despatches too were captured, throwing light on the condition of the army.

Steinmetz spent 10th in moving his army into position on the roads allotted to him, the day proving specially fatiguing to the troops, owing to the blocking and delays due to crossing of columns. The 2nd Army also passed 10th in getting into position, and the net result of much marching was that the French army, advancing via Boulay, could have attacked the 1st Army and the 3rd Corps, secure, to a great extent, from the intervention of the remainder of the 2nd Army, now one day's march or more distant, and overlapping the right of the 3rd Army. [See Map 8.]

The latter continued its westward march, the 1st Bavarian Corps edging away southwards to avoid the 2nd Army. The only other incident of any importance that occurred in the 3rd Army, was a sharp but ineffective bombardment of Phalsbourg, which was then blockaded by troops of the 6th Corps.

Early on 11th, Moltke, now at Saarbruck, seems to have been still convinced that the main body of the French army was behind the Moselle, that is, in its most probable position, with covering detachments on the Nied. Prince Frederick Charles, on the other hand, was more nearly correct in thinking that the whole French army was on the Nied, and proposed to Moltke to envelop it by a converging movement of the 1st and 2nd Armies. August 11th.

As the cavalry reports of 10th came in, and at this period news from the front was somewhat slow in reaching Royal Headquarters, Moltke changed his mind, and his orders for 12th were conceived with the object of concentrating, to either attack the enemy, or to meet his offensive. The 3rd Corps was therefore directed to stand fast, acting as base point, the 1st Army was early to move two corps to the line Boulay—Marange, and one corps towards Boucheporn, pushing outposts to the German Nied. The 2nd Army was to despatch the 9th and 2nd Corps to Longeville, 10th Corps

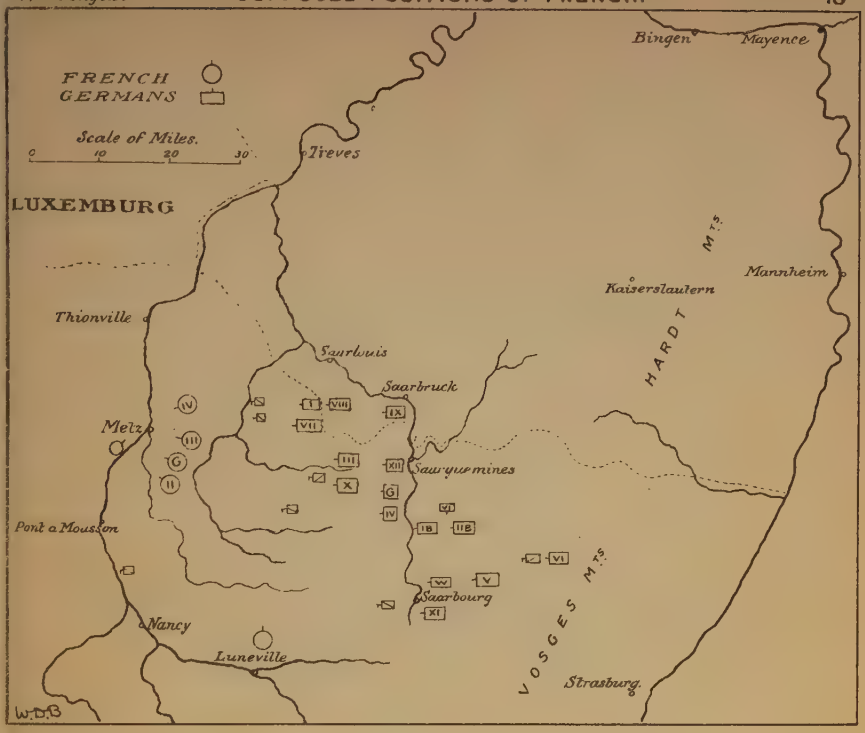
by Lelling towards the left of the 3rd, whilst the Guard and 12th Corps were to close towards the others, ready to proceed either west or north. Thus, on 12th, six Corps should have concentrated for battle, and on 13th ten corps.

Though the German horsemen were not really efficiently handled at this juncture, for they moved in detachments, not in masses, still, by reason of the apathy of the French, a good deal of useful information was gained, on 11th, by the cavalry of the 2nd Army, though the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions effected nothing. The bulk of these were, in fact, kept by heavy rains in their bivouacs, until Moltke, hearing of their inactivity, ordered Steinmetz to push them to the front, when both divisions marched a few miles in the evening. Still two officers' patrols, sent out earlier in the day, discovered and reported that the French were retiring on Metz.

The 2nd Army continued to march in a south-westerly direction, and its cavalry obtained important news of one French corps moving from Ars Laquenexy on Metz, whilst a second corps was seen on the march from Boulay westwards. Reports were brought in of 40,000 men at Luneville, and near Dieulouard frequent trains were observed running from Nancy to Metz. French bivouacs on the Nied, recently vacated, were found to be those of the Guard, 3rd, and 4th Corps, which had retired on Metz. [See Map 18.]

August 12th. On 12th, the German cavalry again brought valuable information of the French dispositions, and at the same time were able, owing to the passivity of the enemy, to screen their own forces. French outposts were found five or six miles east of Metz, and between the outposts and that town were seen the camps of a considerable force, but no French troops were met south of Metz. Pont-a-Mousson and Dieulouard were reported not occupied by the enemy, but many trains were found to be passing along the railway west of the Moselle, and the German troopers made several not very successful attempts to interrupt this traffic.

The cavalry reports seem again to have been somewhat



11th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.

slow in reaching Royal Headquarters, for Moltke was issuing orders at 4.30 p.m. on 12th, based on the assumption that the French had retired beyond the Moselle by way of Metz, and with the object of preventing the junction between McMahon and Bazaine.

In these orders the 1st Army was directed to move on the line Les Etangs—Pange—Courcelles-sur-Nied, covering the right of the 2nd Army, and pushing its cavalry across the Moselle below Metz. The 2nd Army was to advance to Buchy and Chateau Salins, outposts on the Seille, but the crossings over the Moselle, at Pont-a-Mousson, Dieulouard, and Marbache, were to be secured, if possible, and the cavalry was to pass the river. The 3rd Army was to continue its march on Nancy and Luneville.

Moltke, after a period of hesitation, seems, therefore, having brought his armies into line, to have determined on a definite course of action rather than to continue to wait for information, which usually arrived too late to be taken advantage of.

The German operations up to this period have shown that the rapid transmission of information in war is apparently a matter of great difficulty. It would seem, then, that in all circumstances, dispositions must leave a good margin for unexpected developments, subordinates being clearly notified of the General's intentions, but left free to act in their furtherance as the situation may demand.

In accordance with Von Moltke's instructions, Prince Frederick Charles, on 13th, directed that the 5th Cavalry Division was to discover whether the French were retiring from Metz on Verdun, and suggested to Steinmetz a similar reconnaissance north of Metz. The 5th Cavalry Division, however, was unable to collect its scattered brigades in time to cross the Moselle on that day, and the remainder of horsemen of the 2nd Army accomplished little beyond the destruction of the railway at Dieulouard, whilst the cavalry of the 1st Army merely covered its infantry and gained contact with the enemy. The 1st and 2nd Armies reached

August 13th.

their respective stations, and the advanced troops of the 1st Army were, in some cases, actually in contact with the French, whose camps were clearly visible. Yet Steinmetz issued no orders and made no dispositions to meet an attack, which, as a matter of fact, was by no means improbable, though the Germans did not believe it likely. [See Map 9.]

The main object of the Germans was now, whilst observing the French troops lying east of Metz, to secure the passage of the Moselle south of that fortress. To this end Moltke, at 9 p.m. on 12th, issued orders that whilst the 1st Army was to watch the French, and the 3rd and 9th Corps of the 2nd Army were to be held in readiness to support the 1st Army if attacked, the remainder of the 2nd Army was to advance to the Moselle. At the same time all the cavalry divisions were to be pushed well forward to harass the enemy's retreat on the Metz—Verdun road.

Whether Moltke's solution of the problem was the best is questionable. Perhaps it would have been more effective, though doubtless more risky, to have boldly thrust the whole 2nd Army across the Moselle, and by this manœuvre to have forced battle. The 1st Army could have entrenched and taken care of itself, and the further eastwards the French moved the more certain would have been their ruin, once the 2nd Army was astride their line of communication. An alternative suggested in the French official account, is a formation in two wings, one mainly of cavalry, to be placed on the Verdun road, the other east of Metz, with a strong centre, collected south of Metz ready to move north-east or north-west as required.

The 3rd Army began its advance westwards on 13th, towards the line Nancy—Luneville, the 4th Cavalry Division skirmishing with the small fortress of Marsal. On 14th, Marsal was taken by the 2nd Bavarian Corps. A rumour too was current that McMahon was moving towards Strasburg, which decided the Crown Prince (who had intended to rest his troops on 15th) to push forward at once. On 16th the 3rd Army was standing along the Meurthe, from Luneville

to Nancy, with advanced guards on the Moselle. On the late information came to hand tending to show that the 5th French Corps had moved southwards, the 2nd Cavalry Division was sent to cover the left of the army.

On 14th, only two brigades of the 5th Cavalry Division August 14th.
crossed the Moselle, in accordance with Von Moltke's instructions to push cavalry over the river, Kraatzen's brigade not coming up in time, and these brigades, after moving to Pont-à-Mousson and Thiaucourt, were able to report that the French were marching westwards. Of the rest, the Guard Cavalry only went a short distance beyond Dieulouard, the 5th Cavalry Division remained in position covering the march of the three corps of the 2nd Army to the Moselle, and the 1st Cavalry Division was also engaged in watching Metz.

The 2nd Army carried out the movements prescribed in Von Moltke's order, but the commander of the 1st Army considered, apparently, that he was complying with the spirit in neglecting a vital instruction that his troops would remain in position.

About noon reports began to come in from the 1st Cavalry Division, and from the outposts of the 1st Army that the French seemed to be slowly retiring on Metz. The officer commanding the advanced guard of the 7th Corps having heard, about 2.30 p.m., from the 1st Cavalry Division of the march of the 2nd Army, and believing the French to be in full retreat, decided to attack. An action ensued, without much advantage to either side, in which the 1st and 7th and part of the 8th Corps were engaged, but Steinmetz remained at his headquarters until 7 p.m., refusing permission to the commander of the 8th Corps to attack the enemy and help his comrades of the 7th Corps. On arrival on the field Steinmetz ordered the engagement to be broken off, but the orders were so long in arriving at corps headquarters that the 1st Corps only began to withdraw at 11 p.m., whilst the 7th remained in its positions during the night.

Moltke apparently, though during the day as close to the

field as Herny, did not hear of the battle of Borny until the morning of August 15th.

On 14th, at 6 p.m., Royal Headquarters had issued orders to the 3rd, 9th, and 12th Corps to close up and cook early on 15th, the 3rd Corps at same time throwing a bridge below Pont-a-Mousson. The remainder of the 2nd Army was to continue its movement, sending the whole of the cavalry across the Moselle against the enemy's line of communication between Metz and Verdun. The 1st Army was to stand fast, but was to move the 8th Corps to Bazoncourt, preparatory to crossing the Moselle.

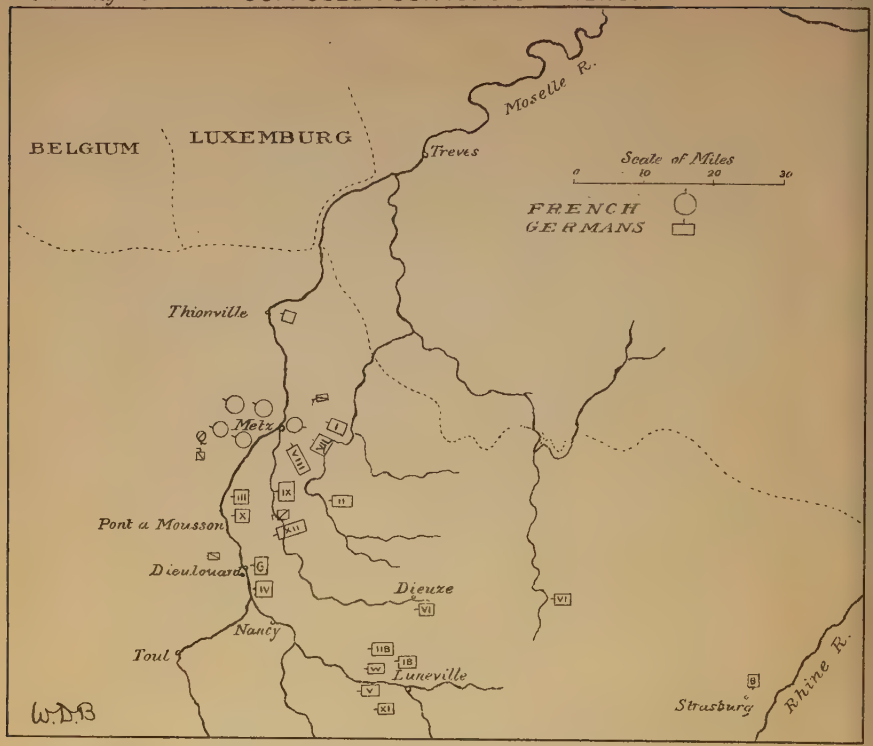
August 15th. On receipt, early on 15th, of news of the action at Borny, Moltke ordered the 1st Army to hold the ground gained the day before, but to keep out of range of the guns of Metz, and directed the 8th and 9th Corps to be moved close up to the battlefield. The 1st Corps and such troops of the 7th Corps as had not retired altogether, therefore again advanced towards their overnight positions.

The morning was foggy, but between 9 and 10 a.m., as the mist began to clear, the King himself rode on to the field, and observing few troops east of Metz, but large clouds of dust to the west of the town, suspended the march of the 1st and 7th Corps, and ordered the 8th Corps to move towards Corny, in which direction the whole of the 1st Army proceeded later in the day, the 2nd Cavalry Division alone observing Metz.

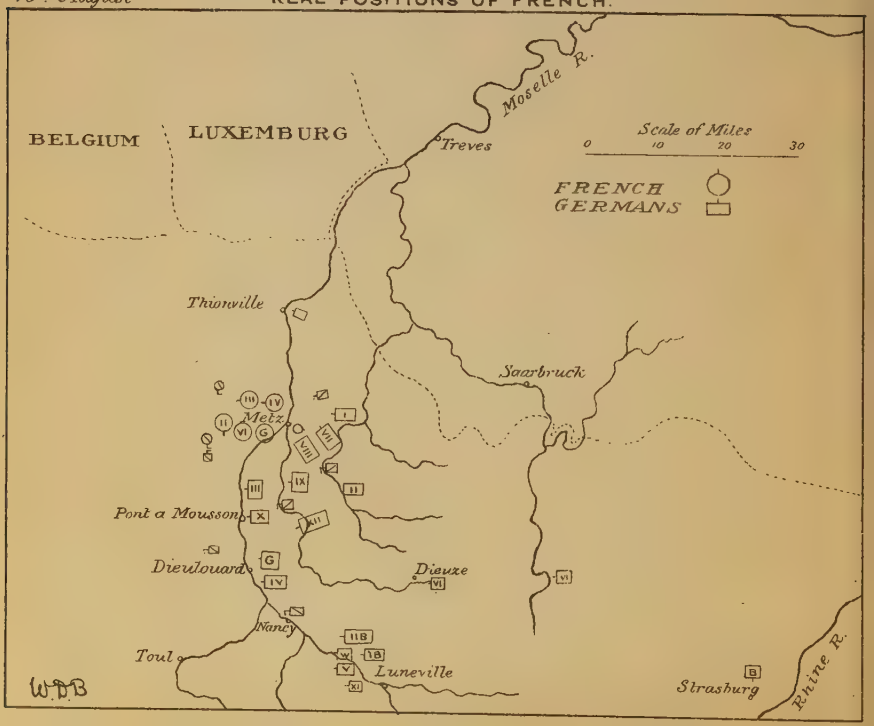
Prince Frederick Charles, who was ignorant that a battle had taken place at Borny, was meanwhile engaged in carrying out his instructions, when he received, early on 15th, a telegram from Moltke containing news of the action, and instructions that the 9th Corps was to march northwards, the 3rd and 12th Corps to come under the orders of the King, and the remainder of the army to pursue, along the Metz—Verdun road.

At 11 a.m. Moltke telegraphed to Prince Frederick Charles that the French were in full retreat on Verdun, and that the 3rd, 9th, and 12th Corps were again placed under

15th August SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF FRENCH.



15th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.



his orders. These corps were accordingly moved towards the Moselle, but did not gain much ground, owing to the necessity for counter-marching or changing direction.

The German cavalry again accomplished less than might have been expected. The southern suburbs of Metz were, however, found free of the enemy. The 5th Cavalry Division skirmished for several hours with French cavalry near Mars la Tour, with whom it remained in contact, and the Guard Cavalry marched westwards, patrolling towards Toul, from which fortress it drew fire.

On the evening of 15th, Moltke, still apparently ignorant of the doings of the 2nd Army on that date, issued instructions that so long as the strength of the French east of Metz remained doubtful, one corps of the 1st Army must watch the fortress, but that the other two were to move to Pommerieux, ready to cross the Moselle; it was added that a vigorous offensive by the 2nd Army, towards the Metz—Verdun road, was the only means of profiting by the victory of 14th. The position of the 3rd Army was notified in the orders, also that Royal Headquarters would move to Pont-a-Mousson on the 16th. [See Map 19.]

Moltke would probably have been better advised to have moved the whole of the 1st Army across the Moselle. The French were more likely to march westwards than to attempt the somewhat hopeless venture of traversing the German communications; and when battle is possible an army can never be too strong.

August 16th. Steinmetz, on 16th, in accordance with the orders referred to above, marched the 1st Corps towards Courcelles-sur-Nied, to remain in observation, the 7th and 8th (who were somewhat delayed by the 9th Corps in their movement) to the area between the Seille and Moselle, the 1st Cavalry Division to the same locality, and the 3rd Cavalry Division southwards, the whole operation being completed without meeting the enemy. The 31st Brigade of the 6th Division, 8th Corps, which a few days earlier had been sent to try to carry Thionville, reached Courcelles-sur-Nied on its

return journey, having found the fortress too well guarded to be captured by assault.

From information gained on 15th, Prince Frederick Charles determined to cross the Moselle on 16th, in order to intercept the retreat of the French, whom he believed to be hurrying westwards, and Royal Headquarters were notified to this effect. The 3rd Corps was to pass the Moselle below Pont-a-Mousson and proceed towards Vionville; the 10th Corps was to march to St. Hilaire and Maizeray, the 9th Corps to Sillegny, the 12th to Pont-a-Mousson, and its cavalry division to Buxerulle; the Guard was to advance to Bernecourt, and the 4th Corps to Jaillon, in the direction of Toul. The 6th Cavalry Division was to move via Pagny; the 5th was to maintain contact, to find out if the enemy was on the Verdun road, and to reconnoitre towards Dieue and Commercy.

Early on 16th the 5th Cavalry Division, reconnoitring towards Rezonville, where a camp had been observed, surprised a French cavalry division in its bivouac. This was the commencement of the battle of Rezonville-Mars la Tour. The French infantry deployed on hearing the German artillery fire, and were at once attacked by the 9th Brigade, advanced guard to the 5th Division, in the belief that a rear-guard had been encountered.

Finally, the whole of the 3rd and 10th Corps, and the 16th Division of the 8th Corps, which had been attracted by the firing, and by calls from the 3rd Corps for assistance, became engaged on the German side, and by a succession of bold attacks, which imposed on the French, succeeded both in avoiding defeat, and in checking the retreat of the French army.

The Germans were, again, perhaps, lucky to escape disaster, and it would certainly seem, that in view of the known proximity to Metz of a large French force, Prince Frederick Charles rather courted defeat by the frontage and direction in which he moved his troops. Apparently he believed that the bulk of the enemy were already well on the way to the

Meuse, and disposed his forces so as to try to anticipate the French before they could reach that river. Had he sent his cavalry towards Conflans, moving his left in the same direction, the arrangement would perhaps have been better adapted to the circumstances.

The remaining Corps of the 2nd Army reached the approximate positions assigned to them, whilst the 4th Corps made an abortive attempt to capture the fortress of Toul.

At noon on 16th, Moltke heard of the action in progress at Rezonville, and proceeded to Pont-a-Mousson, arriving at 5 p.m. Here he found a letter, dated 2 p.m., from the Chief of the Staff of Prince Frederick Charles, in which it was stated that a large body of French had been driven back towards Thionville, that the 3rd Corps had been ordered to pursue, followed by the 10th and 11th Corps, the object being to force the French detachment on to the Belgian frontier, and that the remaining four corps could quietly continue their march to the Meuse. To this note Moltke replied, at 8 p.m., that, supposing the information correct, the whole of the 1st and 2nd Armies should, in his opinion, be used to force the French towards the Belgian frontier, an operation likely to prove decisive if successful.

With this letter Moltke sent a notification to the 2nd Army, that on the morning of 17th, the 7th and 8th Corps would cross the Moselle and march against the enemy, to assist the 3rd, 10th, and 11th Corps, as it was most important to force the French northwards and away from Chalons and Paris. The remainder of the 2nd Army might rest, pushing advanced guards to the Meuse, but the 12th Corps was to move northwards so as to be ready for eventualities.

This order is somewhat undecided, and apparently Moltke did not yet consider the situation sufficiently clear to take definite action, though it would seem that his suggestion of attack by both 1st and 2nd Armies would, in any case, have been a sounder plan than the one adopted.

Meanwhile, Prince Frederick Charles had, at nightfall,

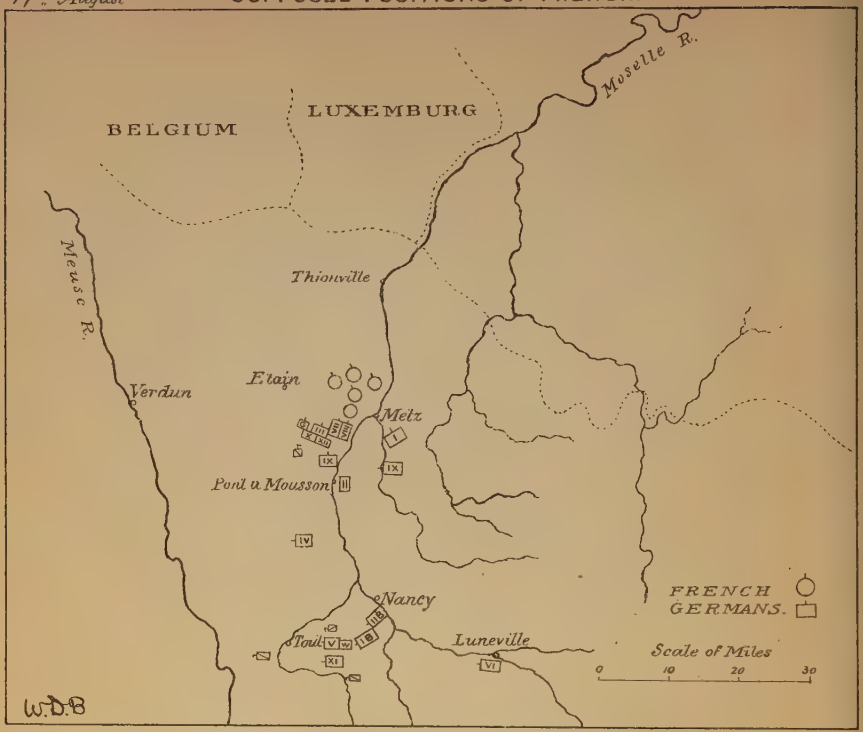
come to the conclusion that he must bring up such of his Corps as were within reach, to support the 3rd and 10th Corps, and at 11 p.m. issued orders for the 9th Corps to assemble, by dawn, at Gorze, and wait for orders; for the 12th to make a night march, by Thiaucourt, towards Mars la Tour, halting south of the Guard. The latter, less its cavalry, which was to march to the Meuse, was to form on the left front of the Saxons. The 2nd Corps was to proceed to Pont-a-Mousson, and await orders, the 4th was to continue its advance on Toul, though it would better have been moved towards the decisive point, Metz.

The receipt of instructions of this nature had been foreseen by both the 12th and Guard Corps, in consequence of news from the field, and each was ready to march. Some confusion, however, resulted from both being directed to advance on Mars la Tour, though no allotment was made of roads available for the movement.

The 1st Army, whose slow and short march on 16th is remarkable, also received orders from Moltke for the 7th and 8th Corps to follow, without baggage, the 9th Corps across the Moselle, and to move against the enemy by the shortest route. Steinmetz, therefore, issued the necessary instructions, directing the 3rd Cavalry Division to cover the passage of the two corps, and the 1st Cavalry Division to accompany the 7th Corps.

August 17th. During the night of the 16th–17th Moltke received reports of the battle of Rezonville, both from Prince Frederick Charles, and from Colonel Bronsart, one of his staff, who had been a spectator. At 2 a.m. on 17th, orders were issued from Royal Headquarters, for the 3rd and 10th Corps to maintain their positions and to be at once supported by the 1st Army, the remainder of the 2nd Army being thought to be too distant to render immediate help.

In the course of the morning of 17th, the Germans saw large French columns defile slowly away towards Gravelotte and northwards, and though the 19th Division and the right of the 3rd Corps were in contact with a body of French



17th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.

near Gravelotte, which the Germans thought was a rear-guard, the latter were too much shaken to dream of disturbing the retirement of the French right, even to the extent of sending after it their numerous cavalry. Touch was therefore lost.

The object of the Germans being to hold fast the French, pending the arrival of the remainder of the 2nd Army, it would seem, that at all costs, the withdrawal of the enemy should have been at least delayed by immediate attack, for there was nothing to show that Bazaine would be so ill-advised as to await investment in Metz. [See Map 20.]

On the morning of 17th, Royal Headquarters ordered the 7th Corps towards Gravelotte, and to occupy the woods lying south-east of that village, but without attacking the French, whilst the 8th Corps was to move to Gorze.

To cover this operation Steinmetz directed the 1st Corps, which was still east of Metz, to cannonade the town, the 1st Cavalry Division to draw towards Corny, and the 3rd Cavalry Division to proceed to Coin les Cuvry.

Of the 2nd Army, the 12th Saxon Corps reached the vicinity of Mars la Tour at about 4 p.m., and went into bivouac. The Guard, after some clashing with the Saxons, also bivouacked, between 5 and 6 p.m., at Hannonville and Suzemont.

Early in the afternoon, Moltke, who with the King was on the field, wished to attack the French, but was dissuaded by Prince Frederick Charles, who pleaded the exhaustion of the troops and the lateness of the hour. At 2 p.m., therefore, Moltke, without troubling to gain further information, and on the supposition that the French army was either round Metz, or in retreat towards Verdun, issued orders, that on 18th, the 2nd Army was to move in echelon from the left, in the general direction Rezonville—Ville-sur-Yron, connecting with the 8th Corps, whilst the 7th Corps was to prevent a French attack from the direction of Metz.

Towards nightfall on 17th, Steinmetz, anxious for the right of the 7th Corps, and as to communication with the

8th Corps, pointed out to Von Moltke that the 7th Corps seemed isolated.

August 18th. At 4 a.m. on 18th, Moltke replied that the 7th Corps must protect the right of the 2nd Army, maintaining a defensive attitude, and that the King would issue further orders on the field. Steinmetz thereupon brought a brigade of the 1st Corps to Vaux, the 3rd Cavalry Division to Augny and Marly, and the 1st Cavalry Division to the Rezonville plateau.

At 8 a.m. on 18th, Prince Frederick Charles personally gave the commanders of the 3rd, 9th, 10th, 12th, and Guard Corps orders for the day's march, directing the Guard to move on the left, on Doncourt; the Saxons in echelon behind its left on Jarny, thus changing the positions of the two corps. The others, in succession, were to advance after the Guard. All troops were to move in masses of divisions, and the cavalry divisions were to be attached to 3rd and 10th Corps. The King and Moltke rode on to the field at 6 a.m., and as the morning progressed information came in tending to show that the French army was west of Metz, with its right at Amanvillers. Prince Frederick Charles was therefore directed to stop the northward march of the Saxons, and if Moltke's appreciation proved to be correct, to envelop the French right with the 9th Corps, whilst the 1st Army attacked the enemy in front. The remainder of the 2nd Army was to halt, ready to act according to circumstances, which seems to imply a doubt in Moltke's mind whether the whole French army was west of Metz.

Prince Frederick Charles, however, appears in a measure to have disregarded this order, believing, as he did, that the French had retired to Verdun.

At 10.30 a.m. Moltke, on receipt of further information, ordered the 12th and Guard Corps on St. Marie, to attack the French right, whilst the 9th Corps and the 1st Army simultaneously engaged the front.

After severe fighting, in which the 7th and 8th Corps, 1st

Army, and the 2nd Corps, 2nd Army, were severely handled at Gravelotte, and the Guard suffered heavily at St. Privat, the 12th Corps turned the French right, which retired into the woods behind St. Privat, unpursued. At nightfall the German troops stood as shown in Appendix II.

Next day Moltke, satisfied with his victory, decided to contain the French Army with a force under Prince Frederick Charles, and with the remainder to join the Crown Prince in pursuit of McMahon's troops. August 19th.

Meanwhile, on 17th, the Crown Prince hearing of considerable French forces at Chalons, aware that Bazaine had retired to the left bank of the Mozelle, and that Moltke wished to prevent the junction of the French Metz and Chalons Armies, determined to march to the Meuse, issuing orders for the arrival of his corps on that river on 19th.

On 17th, the 4th Cavalry Division captured a French despatch rider carrying news of a concentration of troops at Chalons, and heard, in addition, that the 1st and 5th French Corps had retreated by Neufchateau. During the day the Crown Prince was informed of the battle of Vionville, and that another great battle was probable. He consequently sent two officers of his Headquarters Staff to Pont-a-Mousson, to watch and keep him posted as to events.

On 18th, information was obtained that the Emperor had reached Chalons, and confirmation was received of the presence of a large force at that place. Particulars of the battle of Vionville also came to hand.

As a result the Crown Prince warned his troops that the enemy might be encountered in a few days. He disposed his army in three columns, drew back the 4th Cavalry Division behind the first line, and ordered the 2nd Cavalry Division to march on the left of the second line, though it would have been more reasonable to have pushed on the mass of his cavalry to gain touch with the enemy.

VII

German Operations against McMahon's Army of Chalons

August 19th. ON August 19th, the 4th Cavalry Division in advance of the 3rd Army, confirmed the report of the presence of a large force of French at Chalons. During the day Prince Albrecht, its commander, received the Crown Prince's order that the 4th Cavalry Division was to withdraw behind the 5th Corps, against which he made an unavailing protest. The 2nd Cavalry Division also discovered the direction of the retreat of the 5th French Corps, a patrol visiting a village where the French had bivouacked six days earlier.

The Crown Prince received, at 5 a.m., a report as to the battle of Gravelotte, from one of the officers sent to observe the movements of the 1st and 2nd Armies. The action was described as indecisive, and on this information the Crown Prince was anxious to retire one march and concentrate. The proposal was opposed by General Blumenthal, his Chief of the Staff, who thought that as the 3rd Army could not possibly reach Gravelotte in time to influence the fight, it should continue its forward march. The Quartermaster-General of the 3rd Army, on other hand, suggested that the army should halt.

Blumenthal was certainly right in the course he advocated, for best assistance could be given to the 1st and 2nd Armies by pressing on towards Paris, and therefore on to the communications of Bazaine's army, which would probably have caused it to fall back, even if victorious.

At 10 p.m. the other officer of the 3rd Army staff, who

had been sent to Pont-a-Mousson, arrived with news of the retirement of the French. Meanwhile the army had continued its westward march, the 2nd Bavarian Corps detaching a brigade to blockade Toul.

On 20th, the 4th Cavalry Division found Vitry occupied by the 5th French Corps, and the 2nd Cavalry Division reported the country round Epinal free of the enemy. August 20th.

During the day the Crown Prince and Blumenthal rode to Pont-a-Mousson, to confer with the King and Moltke. Here the Crown Prince was informed that Metz was to be blockaded by seven corps and a Landwehr division, under Prince Frederick Charles, six of the former remaining on the left bank of the Meuse; and that the residue of the 1st and 2nd Armies had been constituted into a new army, called the Army of the Meuse, under the Crown Prince of Saxony.

This army, and the 3rd Army, were to operate against the French troops at Chalons, and subsequently against Paris; and the 3rd Army was to await, on the Meuse, the arrival of the Meuse Army, but was to push forward cavalry to establish contact with the enemy.

On 21st, the cavalry of the 11th Corps captured the telegraph office at Joinville, containing records of the despatch of twenty troop trains to St. Dizier and Vitry, on 18th and 19th, whilst the cavalry of the 5th French Corps moved to Chalons by road. This corps was stated to be 29,000 strong. The 2nd and 4th Cavalry Divisions pushed forward reconnaissances towards Chalons, but the rest of the troops remained stationary. August 21st.

On the evening of 22nd, the 3rd and Meuse Armies were practically on the same alignment, facing west, and occupying a frontage of about forty-five miles. The 4th Cavalry Division was covering the 3rd Army, its scouts being in the Marne Valley, and the 5th, 6th, 12th, and Guard Cavalry Divisions, the Meuse Army. August 22nd.

On this date Moltke issued instructions for the westward march on Paris, adding, that when met, the French, who

were at Verdun or Chalons, were to be attacked in front and right flank, so as to force them northwards, and away from the capital. Verdun, meanwhile, was to be carried by the 12th Corps.

In a general way the advance was to be in echelon from the left, the 3rd Army keeping one march in front of the Meuse Army.

Moltke's determination to march on Paris was undoubtedly the surest method of bringing McMahon to battle, who would probably be forced to protect the capital, and the German formation, in echelon from the left, was best adapted to achieve Von Moltke's purpose of driving the French northwards, if met on the direct line to Paris. But though the enemy was still at Chalons, it was by no means certain that he would stay there, and the German movements could most surely have been checked by operating from the Aube River, a manœuvre likely to bring the French on to the left of the 3rd Army, which might then have been successfully attacked.

August 23rd. On 23rd, the Prussian advance commenced. Of the cavalry divisions of the Meuse Army, the 5th reached Neuville and Bras, the 12th Dieue, the 6th Genicourt, with advanced troops at Mondrecourt, Souilly, Senaucourt. The Guard Cavalry assembled at Fresnes-au-Mont, and pushed reconnaissances to the line Neuville-en-Verdunois, Erize la Brulee.

The 12th Corps, detailed to assault Verdun next day, moved to Haudiomont and Eix, the Guard to St. Mihiel, the 4th Corps to Vadonville, with advanced guard Triconville.

Of the 3rd Army, the main body of the 4th Cavalry Division marched to St. Dizier, with advanced guard at Perthes, and pushing reconnaissances to Chalons, found the camp had been evacuated. On this news, and at the desire of Moltke, the 4th Cavalry Division was ordered to move up the left and the Wurtemburg cavalry up the right bank of the Marne, to discover the direction in which French had

marched. Information was also gained from French newspapers, and confirmed by telegram from London, of the composition, strength, and position of McMahon's army, said to number 150,000, and to be at Reims; and of the formation of a 13th Corps under General Vinoy.

The 2nd Cavalry Division reached Dainville-aux-Forges, west of Neufchateau, and learnt that 6000 Gardes Mobiles, with artillery, were at Langres. It was consequently ordered on Arcis-sur-Aube, and to cut the railway lines at Troyes. On this day an attempt was made by part of the 6th and of the 1st Bavarian Corps to carry Toul, which was unsuccessful. One regiment, one squadron, and one battery, were consequently left to watch the place.

August 24th. On the morning of August 24th, reports were received from the 5th Cavalry Division confirming the evacuation by the French of Chalons, and at the same time an intercepted letter was sent from Metz, by Prince Frederick Charles, written by an officer of high rank, and stating that Bazaine would soon be relieved by McMahon. At first Moltke was disinclined to credit this statement, believing that the French were more probably moving from Chalons to take up a position at Reims or Laon, and thus indirectly to protect Paris. The Crown Prince of Saxony was, however, ordered to reconnoitre towards Longuyon, and to break the railway connecting Reims and Thionville; and the 3rd Army to discover the enemy's positions, and to close the 6th Corps towards the remainder. Later, after a conference between Royal Headquarters and the staff of the 3rd Army, held at Ligny, it was decided to push rapidly westwards, and bring McMahon to battle as soon as possible.

On the 24th, the 12th Corps attack Verdun unsuccessfully. As to the movements of the remainder it is noticeable that cavalry was not pushed across the Argonnes hills, to reconnoitre or clear their defiles.

August 25th. At 11 a.m. on 25th, Moltke, from Bar le Duc, issued the following orders: "The enemy has left Chalons and is marching to Reims. The Meuse and 3rd Armies will

therefore advance in north-westerly direction. Cavalry will be pushed well forward, and will pass Vouziers and Buzancy. If nothing unforeseen occurs in the meanwhile, 27th will be a rest day, and will be used to fill up supply columns."

Moltke seems to have planned that if the French retired from Reims on Paris, the German armies would follow, moving at first on a frontage of forty-five miles, the right on Reims, the left on Arcis-sur-Aube, but gradually reducing the frontage, during the westward march, to twenty-five miles. But if it became necessary to march northwards, McMahon was to be met on the right bank of the Meuse, near Damvillers, rather than on the left bank, where the bulk of the 3rd Army could hardly co-operate in the battle.

At Damvillers, as Moltke computed, the French could, in three days, be opposed by the Meuse Army, the two Bavarian Corps, and two corps, the 3rd and 9th, drawn from the force blockading Metz.

If the French moved slowly, both the Meuse and 3rd Armies could probably be concentrated near Damvillers to meet McMahon.

In any case, Moltke wished the 3rd Army to advance, so as to be able to wheel clear of the Meuse Army, a manœuvre which would enable the 3rd Army to most rapidly co-operate with the force under the Crown Prince of Saxony, and would be more easily made than a right turn behind it.

In the evening of the 25th, Moltke received information pointing to the probability of a movement by the French from Reims to Vouziers. French newspapers also came to hand, dilating on the shame to France if Bazaine was abandoned, and a telegram arrived from London to the effect that McMahon had decided to relieve Bazaine. At the same time Moltke learnt that the French had passed Rethel.

Suspecting, however, that the statements in the French papers were false, and intended to divert the Germans

from Paris, Moltke was disinclined to move the whole army northwards, but decided that the Meuse Army should concentrate on its right, the 2nd and 1st Bavarian Corps also moving in this direction. Orders to this effect were therefore issued at 11 p.m., and Lieutenant-Colonel Von Verdy du Vernois was sent to the Crown Prince of Saxony to explain Moltke's idea; he was to add that the movement might be deferred until midday on 26th, but if, at this hour, no news had been received of the French, it was to take place. The orders issued earlier on 25th would only hold good if the French were found not to be marching north-east.

The armies moved on 25th to their stations, the 5th Cavalry Division of the Meuse Army breaking the railway west of Montmedy. The 4th Cavalry Division of the 3rd Army captured Vitry.

On 26th, after his conference with Colonel Von Verdy du Vernois, the Crown Prince of Saxony, computing that he could not possibly receive information of the enemy before noon, ordered, at 5 a.m., the 12th Corps on Varennes, the 12th and 5th Cavalry Divisions on Bantheville and Grand Pre, and the 6th Cavalry Division to watch Reims. At 6.30 a.m. directions were sent to the Guard to move, at 11 a.m., on Dombasle, with only 1st line transport; at 2 p.m. the 4th Corps was to follow to Fleury. Army Headquarters would proceed to Clermont. August 26th.

The 12th Cavalry Division discovered no enemy in Buzancy, but heard that three battalions, with cavalry and guns, had that morning moved on Vouziers; five battalions were also seen marching north of Grand Pre.

The 5th Cavalry Division found the French in Vouziers, and in the neighbourhood of Monthois were discovered abandoned camps; moreover, inhabitants stated that large bodies of the enemy had for two days been advancing towards Vouziers. Numerous bivouac fires were also seen near Vouziers.

The 6th Cavalry Division found the enemy camped east

of Vouziers, and heard that 150,000 men were in its vicinity. Reims and Chalons were reported by peasants clear of French.

The cavalry of the Meuse Army had therefore, somewhat tardily, again established touch with the enemy.

The infantry of this army made a difficult march through the Argonnes.

Of the 3rd Army, the 4th Cavalry Division, riding westwards, found French in Reims and Gardes Mobiles in Epernay. During the day this division was ordered on Vouziers, and the 2nd Cavalry Division on Chalons. Part of the 11th Corps had also, by noon, moved to the neighbourhood of Heiltz L'Evique, and the 6th Corps to Thieblemont. The other corps had remained in their bivouacs, so that the army was now closely concentrated for eventualities.

During the morning the Crown Prince and Blumenthal went to Royal Headquarters, at Bar le Duc, to confer with the King and Moltke, where they found that such news as had come in pointed to the movement of French, 110,000 strong, northward and north-eastward from Reims. It was now a question whether the 3rd Army should march west and then north, or behind the Meuse Army. The Crown Prince and Blumenthal preferred the latter, but Moltke, though McMahon's army was apparently the decisive factor for the moment, inclined to allow the Crown Prince to proceed on Paris, believing the Meuse Army strong enough to cope with the French. Finally, and probably as a compromise, orders were issued, at noon, to the effect that as McMahon's army appeared to have concentrated at Vouziers, the Meuse Army and the 1st and 2nd Bavarian Corps were to advance in this direction. All troops were to march without supply columns, but with three days' rations, and all waggons, not indispensable, were to be left behind. Royal Headquarters would be at Clermont. A copy of this order was sent to Prince Frederick Charles, who was requested to send two corps so as to arrive at Damvillers on 28th,

26th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH

abandoning, if necessary, for the moment, the blockade of the east of Metz.

The Crown Prince, on his part, gave orders, at 4 p.m., destined to bring the 5th, 6th, and 11th Corps and the Würtemberg Division, on 27th, to the neighbourhood of St. Menehould.

At 11 p.m. further information received by Moltke tended to show that the French were making for Metz. So orders were issued for the Meuse Army to march on Dannvillers, occupying the Meuse bridges at Dun and Stenay, and watching the flanks of the French with cavalry. [See Map. 21.]

The Bavarians were directed to proceed towards Nixeville and Dombasle, and the remainder of the 3rd Army on St. Menehould. A telegraph line was laid down from the Headquarters of Prince Frederick Charles to Buzy-la-Petite, and the instruction as to the despatch of two of his corps to Dannvillers was confirmed by telegram.

On 27th, the four cavalry brigades of the Meuse Army at once covered the north-eastward march of the force, and kept watch on the French. The Germans only met one regiment of French cavalry, with which a Saxon Brigade skirmished. The lack of enterprise shown by the French was perhaps fortunate for the Germans, whose cavalry divisions were somewhat scattered and out of supporting distance of one another. August 27th.

The information gained, pointed to the presence of Douay's Corps at Vouziers, and of a large force near Stenay; and a Belgian traveller stated, that at Montmedy, he had seen General Marguerittes Cavalry Division, whilst country people reported 80,000–100,000 men between Le Chesne and Buzancy.

The German troops moved northwards, but steep and bad roads much delayed the Guard, and caused the 2nd Bavarian Corps, which was following, to halt before reaching its appointed station. The 4th Corps also hindered the march of the 1st Bavarian Corps.

By nightfall, the 5th, 9th, and 11th Corps and the Wurtemburg Division were considerably behind the remainder of the German armies, whose total depth amounted to some twenty-five miles.

From information to hand, Royal Headquarters concluded that the French were marching, part by Buzancy, and part by Beaumont, but had, for some reason, halted on 27th, and had therefore not yet reached the Meuse. The crossings at Dun and Stenay had meanwhile been occupied by the 12th Corps, whilst the Guard and the 4th Corps had thrown bridges below Verdun, ready to pass the river. Believing that, in these circumstances, it would be possible to meet the French with superior force on the left bank of the Meuse, without withdrawing troops from Metz, Moltke countermanded his order to Prince Frederick Charles, and issued instructions calculated to bring, on 29th, the 5th, 6th, and 11th Corps and the Wurtemburg Division to line Grand Sechault—Sommepy, and the remainder of the troops to the line Grand Pre—Buzancy—Nouart. The 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions were to be placed directly under the orders of Royal Headquarters.

August 28th. The weather was foggy on 28th, but in spite of this the German cavalry was able easily to watch the movements of the French from the hills south of the Meuse.

The 6th Cavalry Division learnt that a French column had marched to Ballay, and that hostile troops were collecting near Quatre Champs; six French battalions were observed at Voncq, and a report was received from peasants of the presence, since 23rd, of 12,000 of the enemy at Attigny. The country people also stated that the Emperor and McMahon were in the neighbourhood, and had with them four corps.

The 5th Cavalry Division accomplished little, but the Guard Cavalry reported French marching northwards from Beaumont, and hostile troops advancing eastwards of Autruche. In the evening, enemy's bivouacs were seen on the line Bar—Fosse—Belval Bois des Dames, and near Stenay,

whilst Nouart was found to be in the hands of the French. The 12th Cavalry Division obtained news of movements of cavalry, followed by infantry, on Nouart.

Covered by the cavalry, the bulk of the German infantry continued to march northwards.

The 12th Corps, which remained halted, fortified Dun and Stenay in expectation of a French attack, and with a detachment destroyed the railway at Chauvency, driving away a small force of French.

The Guard and 4th Corps, picking up the bridges they had thrown over the Meuse, moved eight or ten miles, as did the Bavarian Corps.

Moltke's order of 27th, reached the Crown Prince at 4.30 a.m. on 28th, and as the troops had only a short march to make, they were allowed to break camp, as a rule, late. Owing to their close concentration there was a good deal of delay and crossing of columns, which might have been avoided had an earlier start been made. For other reasons the late march of the main portion of the 3rd Army cannot be commended, for in war the situation changes so frequently, that modifications in the itinerary of troops are constantly required, and it is therefore best to commence the day's march as soon as may be.

No enemy was, however, met, and by evening the Germans were on a frontage of twenty-five miles, but the corps on the left were too closely massed to allow real freedom of action.

Early on 28th, Moltke, from information gained on 27th, was inclined to think that the French were retiring northwards, and issued instructions for the German armies to go on with their former movements.

But on receipt of news furnished, on 28th, by the Guard Cavalry, he concluded that the French were persisting in their advance towards the Meuse. As this was likely, if the Germans continued to march in their echelon formation, to bring the French into conflict with only about half of the German forces, Moltke decided to move up the

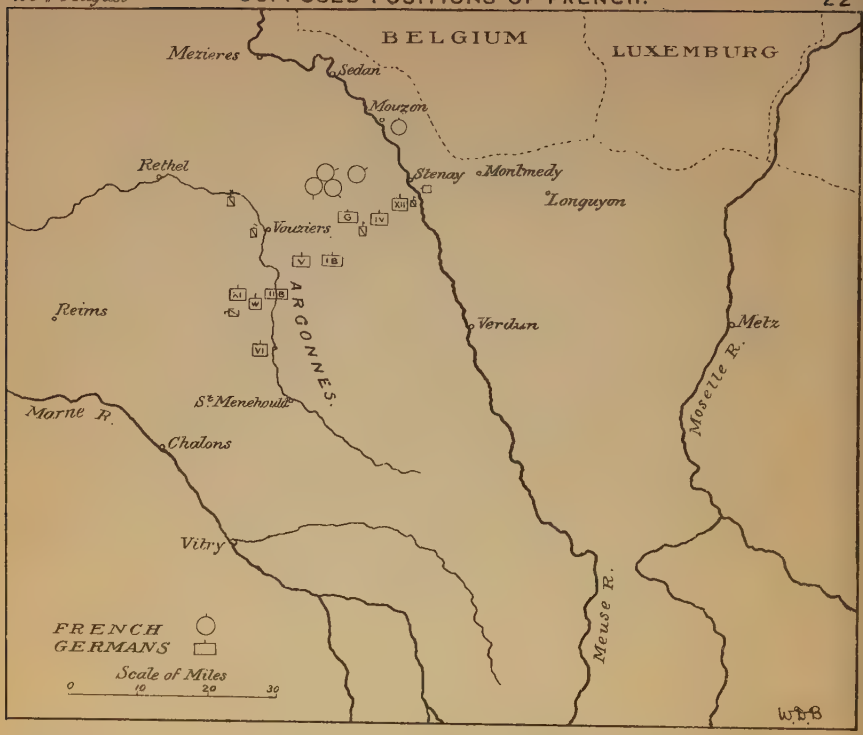
3rd Army into line with the Meuse Army, and issued orders in this sense. [See Map 11.]

The Crown Prince of Saxony was directed not to provoke the enemy, but to assemble, early, the 12th, 4th, and Guard Corps in a defensive position on the line St. Juvin—Aincreville, though he might occupy the Buzancy road if weakly held by the enemy. The river between Dun and Stenay was to be observed by a detached brigade. The two Bavarian Corps were to move, early, on Sommerance and Corny, the 5th Corps on Senuc, the remainder of the 3rd Army in such direction as to be in position to take part, on 30th, in a decisive battle.

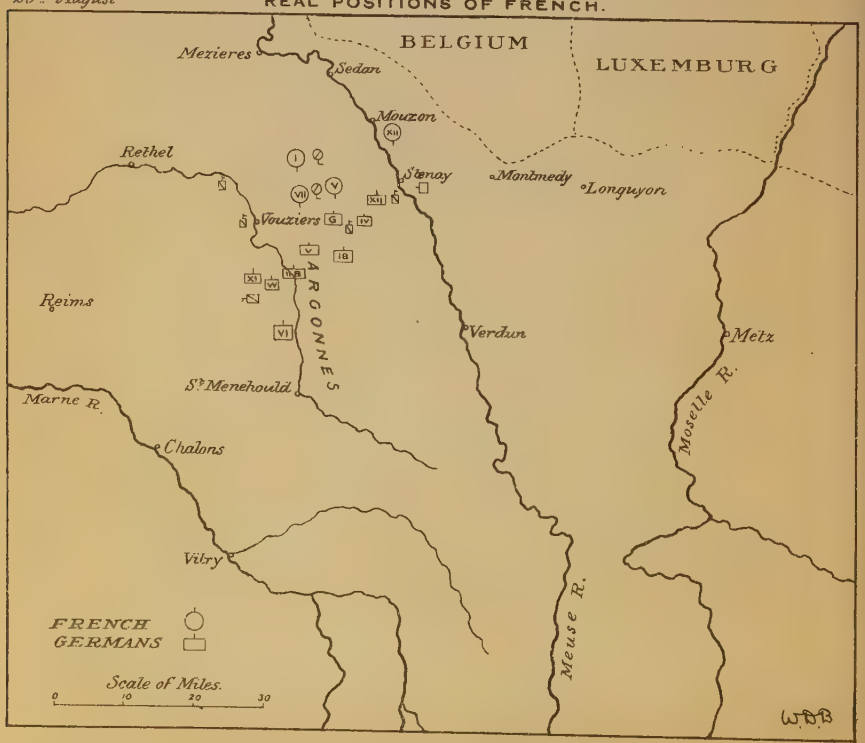
Thus Moltke hoped to strike the French in flank if they moved east, and to force them into Belgium, but no arrangements were made, nor were instructions issued for the delay of the enemy's march should he choose to retire, so perhaps, even at the risk of a check, the Meuse Army, with the support of the two Bavarian Corps, should have been directed to attack if the French showed signs of marching northwards.

August 29th. On 29th, at 8 a.m., the Crown Prince of Saxony met the commanders of the Guard, 4th, and 12th Corps, on a hill south of Aincreville, and received their reports, which showed that there were no French north of the Bar River and Harricourt, that Dieulet Wood was held, and that the 12th Cavalry Division was moving on Nouart. The Crown Prince then gave directions that close contact was to be established with the enemy, and with this object the army might have to move to the Buzancy road. The Guard Cavalry was to march on Beaumont, the 1st and 2nd Guard Divisions on Buzancy, the 12th Cavalry Division on Beaumont, the advanced guard of the 12th Corps on Beaumont, main body on Nouart. These dispositions, the generals were told, were only for the purpose of gaining information, the intention being not to attack until next day.

As a matter of fact, the proposed movement of the Meuse Army might easily have led to a general action between the



29th August REAL POSITIONS OF FRENCH.



three German and the four French corps, and though the former would probably have held their own, McMahon, after such engagement, could hardly have continued his advance on Metz, and might have made good his retreat northwards.

The skirmish of Nouart did actually take place between the 12th Saxon and the 5th French Corps, the latter retiring on Beaumont. During the action, the commander of the Guard, hearing firing, was undecided whether to march to the sound of the guns, but ended by referring to the Crown Prince of Saxony. The latter replied that the Guard should remain at Bar and Buzancy. Part of the Guard Cavalry, however, followed a French corps to St. Pierremont.

The 4th Cavalry Division remained at Vouziers, and the 2nd Cavalry Division moved to Gratreul, where it heard that 100,000 men were being sent from Paris and Cherbourg to Reims, a report of French at the latter place, being confirmed by an officer's patrol.

The 5th Cavalry Division proceeded to Attigny to menace the French line of communication, also cutting the railway between Rethel and Mezieres. The 6th Cavalry Division remained at Vouziers, but maintained touch, by means of patrols, with the 1st French Corps in the direction of Le Chesne.

The remaining troops moved as ordered, but there was again a good deal of delay, caused by the crossing of the columns of the 3rd Army.

During the day Royal Headquarters advanced to Grand Pre, where the information received seemed to show that two or three hostile corps were between Belval Bois des Dames, and St. Pierremont, that Beaumont was held, but that some French troops had crossed the Meuse. It was therefore to be inferred that the whole French army was moving north-east towards the Meuse, and that, on 30th, the bulk of the enemy would be between Le Chesne and Beaumont, covered by rear-guards. [See Map 22.]

Moltke thereupon decided to attack before the French could cross the Meuse, and, at 11 p.m., issued orders to this effect. Under these, the Meuse Army, less the Guard, was instructed to advance, at 10 a.m. next day, on Beaumont, using the roads to the east of the Buzancy road; the Guard was to become reserve, and was to clear the Buzancy road by 8 a.m. The 3rd Army, marching early, was to direct its right, by Buzancy, on Beaumont, in such a manner as to support the Meuse Army with two corps.

August 30th. At 8 a.m. on 30th, corps commanders met the Crown Prince of Saxony at Bayonville, and received instructions as to passage of the Dieulet Wood, under which each infantry division, on arrival at the northern edge, was to bring its artillery into action, but not to quit the wood until information had been received that all the other divisions were ready to do so.

During the night of 29th–30th the German cavalry had discovered that the French were retiring northwards from Belval Bois des Dames, and by 8 a.m. was well on the move, the 12th Division on Beaumont, the 2nd on Buzancy, the 4th on Chatillon, the 5th to Tourteron, to harass the French communications, and the 6th on Semuy, for the same purpose. Close contact was, therefore, soon established with the enemy.

At about noon, the advanced troops of the 4th German Corps surprised the 5th French Corps in camp near Beaumont. At 2 p.m. the 1st Bavarian Corps, which was on the right of the 3rd Army, began to arrive on the field, moving towards La Besace, and at about the same time part of the 1st Division of the 7th French Corps came into action near Stonne. Finally, on the arrival of the 12th German Corps on the right of the 4th, the 5th French Corps retired on Mouzon, assisted, in its retreat, by the 12th French Corps.

The Bavarians easily beat the detachment of the 1st Division of the 7th French Corps, and the whole corps,

covered by a rear-guard, retreated on Raucourt, and crossed the Meuse just below Mouzon.

Finally, the 4th German Corps captured the south-west suburb of Mouzon, but the French succeeded in holding the bridge over the Meuse, and the village of Mouzon itself.

During the action, the 5th Cavalry Division continued to move on Attigny and Tourteron, and the 6th on Semuy, Le Chesne, and Bouvellemont.

The remainder of the 3rd Army marched in the general direction of Stonne, and here the 5th Corps, which was next the Bavarian Corps, found the French apparently in force. The Crown Prince, who had ridden to the St. Pierremont heights, instead of ordering an attack to at any rate force the enemy to show his hand, thereupon decided to postpone the offensive until the arrival of the 11th Corps, which was marching by Le Chesne. At the same time he directed the Wurtemburg Division and the 2nd and 4th Cavalry Divisions to converge towards Stonne, thus tending to compress the two armies into a somewhat restricted area, rather than to envelop the French right and cut off their retreat. Royal Headquarters, near Vaux-en-Dieulet, had meanwhile observed the beginning of the action at Beaumont, and judging that to press the French too hard at first might cause precipitate retirement, notified the Crown Prince that he was not to act with great vigour, an attitude which might equally have allowed them to escape at their leisure.

Between 2 and 3 p.m. the French evacuated Stonne, and the 5th German Corps advanced on La Besace, but finding the Bavarians already in possession, halted.

The Germans bivouacked for the night, somewhat crowded together. [See Map 12.]

The Royal Headquarters Staff, at Buzancy, were not accurately informed as to the positions of their own troops at nightfall, but thinking that a concentric attack on the enemy, reported to be retiring, would produce great results, Moltke, at 11 p.m., issued the following order:—

"The troops will march early to-morrow, and will attack all French met on the left bank of the Meuse, with the object of hemming them in between this river and the Belgian frontier.

"The Meuse Army must check any eastward movement of the French left, and to this end will send two corps across the Meuse to envelop the enemy, if he takes up a position facing Mouzon. The 3rd Army will operate against the hostile front and right. If the enemy enters Belgian territory, he will be followed, unless immediately disarmed."

At the same time Bismark telegraphed to the German Minister at Brussels, that the French might cross the Belgian frontier, and would, in this case, he hoped, be disarmed.

August 31st. During the night of 30th–31st, the Saxon Cavalry reported movement of trains between Carignan and Sedan, and rumbling of wheels on the Mouzon—Douzy road. A detachment was consequently sent to cut the railway between Carignan and Montmedy, and on his return, the officer in charge of the party which executed this work, stated that a French camp, previously remarked at Sailly, had disappeared.

This information the Crown Prince of Saxony forwarded to Royal Headquarters, and to the 1st Bavarian Corps, suggesting that the latter should destroy the railway near Bazeilles.

At 6 a.m. on 31st, the Crown Prince of Saxony ordered the cavalry of the Guard and 12th Corps to cross the Meuse at Pouilly, and at Letanne, where the Guard Pioneers had thrown a bridge, subsequently advancing on Amblimont and Carignan. The Guard infantry was to move, at 9 a.m., by Pouilly, on Vaux and Sailly, and the 12th Corps by Letanne on Carignan; the 4th Corps was to be, at 11 a.m., west of Mouzon, ready to march.

In the early morning the Saxon Cavalry learnt that Mouzon had been abandoned by the French, and that the

enemy's army was withdrawing on Carignan and Sedan. At 10 a.m., the Saxon Horse Guns fired, from Vaux, on part of the 1st French Corps retiring from Carignan, and at about noon the Guard Cavalry had passed Carignan. Later, the Saxony Cavalry saw, from the hills near Amblimont, long columns of French moving on the right bank of Chiers River.

On receipt of these reports, the Crown Prince of Saxony, concluding that the French would offer no resistance on the left bank of the Chiers, directed the 12th Corps to halt east of the Mouzon—Douzy road, the Guard to occupy Sachy and Escombres, with advanced guards at Pouru-aux-Bois and Pouru St. Remy. The 4th Corps was to have moved northwards along the left bank of the Meuse, but on hearing that the 1st Bavarian Corps had reached Remilly, the Crown Prince of Saxony ordered the 4th Corps to go into billets again, if no serious fighting had taken place by 1 p.m.

The Crown Prince of Saxony proposed that the Meuse Army should remain halted on 1st, but ready to march at 7 a.m., though it would seem that such attitude would have given the French a chance of escape, and that the Meuse Army could best have exercised its influence by attacking and delaying the enemy.

The orders issued to the 3rd Army for 31st, were that the French must be attacked wherever met, and forced into the confined area between the Meuse and Belgium. The following troops were to march at 6 a.m.: the 1st Bavarian Corps on Remilly, the 11th Corps on Donchery and Sedan, the Wurtemburg Division on Boutencourt, where it was to occupy the left bank of the Meuse.

The 5th Corps, moving at 8 a.m., was to advance on Chemery, and wait for orders; the 2nd Bavarian Corps was, at same hour, to proceed to Raucourt. The 6th Corps was to march to Semuy and Attigny, and would therefore be nearly twenty miles from Sedan.

The 4th Cavalry Division, breaking camp at 5 a.m., was to follow the enemy to the Meuse, the 6th to proceed to-

wards Mezieres, the 5th to halt, but to reconnoitre towards Reims, the 2nd to follow the 5th Corps to Chemery.

On August 31st, the 4th Cavalry Division, after cannonading Sedan railway station from across the Meuse, and discovering that Donchery bridge was not guarded, assembled at Villers-sur-Bar.

Some officers of the headquarters staff of the 11th Corps, reconnoitring towards Frenois, found Donchery unoccupied and the bridge intact, and heard from the inhabitants that empty trains were leaving Sedan for Mezieres, and returning with troops. They therefore cut the railway and telegraph lines, with the help of their escort.

Later, the advanced troops of the 11th Corps occupied the village and bridge, threw a second bridge in this neighbourhood, and blew up the railway bridge over the Meuse east of Donchery.

The Wurtemburg Division, meanwhile, skirmished with some detachments of Vinoy's Corps from Mezieres.

The 1st Bavarian Corps attacked Bazeilles but was driven across the Meuse again, and the French therefore retained possession of the railway bridge at Bazeilles, which they were unable to destroy owing to want of explosives. The Germans, however, finally succeeded in establishing some pontoon bridges west of Bazeilles.

The remaining German troops were not engaged.

Royal Headquarters possessed accurate information on the evening of 31st of the French dispositions, which pointed to the grouping of the whole hostile army round Sedan. [See Map 13.]

In these circumstances Von Moltke thought there were three alternatives before the enemy. He could march into Belgian territory, retire northwards, or endeavour to march southwards by Carignan. The second appeared to be the most reasonable course, though, as is now known, it is doubtful whether McMahon's troops were really in condition to escape, unless they disbanded to a great extent. If the third was adopted, it was believed that the Meuse

Army could hold the French. Considering that his instructions of 30th were still well adapted to the situation, Moltke issued no further orders.

On the evening of 31st, the Crown Prince directed the 5th and 11th Corps to march, at dawn, by Donchery on Vrigne-aux-Bois; the Wurtemburg Division to cross the Meuse at Dom-le-Mesnil, and be prepared to move either on Mezieres or on Sedan; the 2nd Bavarian Corps to take post between Frenois and Wadelincourt, and prevent the French from marching southwards; and the 1st Bavarian Corps to proceed to Remilly and await orders.

The 2nd, 4th, and 6th Cavalry Divisions were to move, respectively, to Boutencourt, south of Frenois and Flize; but the 5th Cavalry Division and the 6th Corps, instead of being closed on to Sedan, or even Mezieres, were to remain in their present positions ready to march. During the night the Crown Prince received information from Moltke that the French seemed inclined to abandon their baggage and retire westwards, and that, in consequence, the 11th Corps and the Wurtemburg Division should cross the Meuse during the night. The 5th and 11th Corps were therefore ordered to march at once, and the 1st Bavarian Corps to attack the enemy in Bazeilles before daybreak. At the same time news of these movements was sent to the Crown Prince of Saxony, with a request that he would prevent the French from advancing eastwards.

On receipt of this intimation, the Crown Prince of Saxony decided to attack, though he believed considerable bodies of the enemy were still at La Moncelle and Villers Cernay. The Guard was ordered on Villers Cernay and Francheval, the 12th Corps on La Moncelle, both moving at 5 a.m. The 4th Corps was at once to send a division against Bazeilles, the other standing in reserve at Mairy.

The result of these orders was, that by the evening of September 1st, the Germans had forced a part of the French army into Sedan, and had encircled the remainder. The King of Prussia now sent the Emperor Napoleon a

Sept. 1st.

demand for the surrender of the troops, to which the Emperor agreed.

Moltke therefore issued the following instructions:—

"Negotiations have begun with the French; fighting will therefore be suspended during the night, but any attempt by the enemy to break through our troops will be checked. If the negotiations are abortive, our batteries posted to the east of Frenois will open fire, when the attack will recommence."

During 1st, part of the Wurtemburg Division skirmished with Vinoy's 13th Corps near Mezieres, but the 6th Corps and the 5th Cavalry Division do not appear to have been engaged.

The German armies halted for the night in a circle round Sedan, and with the surrender of the French the first phase of the war was brought to a close.

The lessons to be learnt from the German operations are, to a great extent, the same as, or the converse of, those obtained from the French.

The difficulty of war, and especially of the war of masses, is clearly shown. It is seen how even great men become irresolute in unexpected circumstances, and are unable steadfastly to pursue their ends. Time after time, too, German success was due to French errors, and opportunities were given to the French to turn, at any rate by partial victory, the tide of the war. In war, in fact, he wins whose plan of operations is inherently sound, who makes the fewest mistakes, and who has insight to be able to probe the enemy's intentions, and to discern between the false and the true in information that comes to hand. The importance of obtaining early and accurate news of the enemy is evident, and, conversely, of concealing one's own intentions. The danger, too, is obvious, underlying action on a preconceived notion of the enemy's movements, as opposed to the determination to force him to conform to our will.

The necessity for close intercommunication and for generous co-operation is clearly shown, as are the difficulties

experienced by a commander in overcoming the retarding action of his subordinates, who, by moral influence, must be forced to fully acknowledge the leader's authority.

The effect of Von Moltke's genius, as demonstrated both in the German organization, in the bearing of the troops, and in the attitude of his opponents, again proves that in war it is the man, and not men, that weighs heaviest in the balance.

PROBLEMS SUGGESTED BY THE EARLIER OPERATIONS OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

I

IT is June, 1870, and you are Staff Officer to Von Moltke, who directs you to outline a plan, suitable to the eventuality of war with France, for the strategical deployment of the Guard, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th Corps, the 1st and 2nd Bavarian Corps, the Wurtemburg and Baden Divisions, and 3rd and 4th Cavalry Divisions.

The routes to be used by the troops will, as far as possible, be indicated, and a rough computation made of the time required to assemble the force in the localities you select, assuming that units will be ready to rail on the eighth day after orders to mobilize and that the railway lines are all single. Reference will also be made to the manner in which the army is to be supplied prior to assumption of hostilities.

II

You are Staff Officer to Marshal Le Bœuf, French War Minister in 1870, and about July 6th are directed to draw up and submit at an early date a general plan of operations suitable to the eventuality of war with Germany, and having regard to the possibility of Austrian co-operation.

III

Discuss the situation on August 1st, 1870—

(1) As it appeared to the French;

(2) The actual situation;

stating what measures you think might have been most advantageously taken by the French leaders.

IV

Criticize Von Moltke's dispositions on August 10th, stating how you would have moved the German armies had you been in his place.

V

Looking at the operations from the French point of view, and having regard—

(1) To the information possessed by them of the movements and positions of the German armies;

(2) To the actual disposition of the German forces;

state what course you think should have been pursued by the French on August 11th, 1870.

VI

Giving reasons for your decision, state what action you would have taken had you been Marshal Bazaine on August 13th, 1870, and possessed the information available to him on that date.

Draft any orders you think the Marshal should have issued to his troops.

VII

Review the situation on August 15th, 1870—

(1) As it appeared to Prince Frederick Charles;

(2) As it actually was;

stating what orders for 16th you would have issued had you been Prince Frederick Charles.

VIII

Appreciate the situation from the point of view of Marshal Bazaine, in the evening of August 16th, 1870.

IX

In the circumstances, so far as they were known to the French Government on August 21st, 1870, state what military policy would, in your opinion, have best served the interests of the nation.

X

On the information at the disposal of German Headquarters on the evening of August 24th, 1870, draft the orders you think should have been issued by Von Moltke.

XI

Taking the actual disposition of the two armies as on August 29th, 1870, state what action you consider should have been taken—

(1) By German Headquarters;

(2) By Marshal McMahon.

XII

Having regard to the actual situation of the Germans on August 31st, 1870, and to the probable action of the French, suggest the measures you think should have been taken by German Headquarters.

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